

Caroline

Courtland
Street

May 1885
Hills



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When you leave, please leave this book
Because it has been said
"Ever'thing comes t' him who waits
Except a loaned book."

To my dear Mrs Dewey
with much affection
from her friend —

Weyman Jay Mills

New York —



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[See p. 1

"THE GIRL LEANED OUT OF THE GRAY, WEATHER-STAINED BALCONY AND
HUMMED A QUAIN, ROLICKING AIR"

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

By
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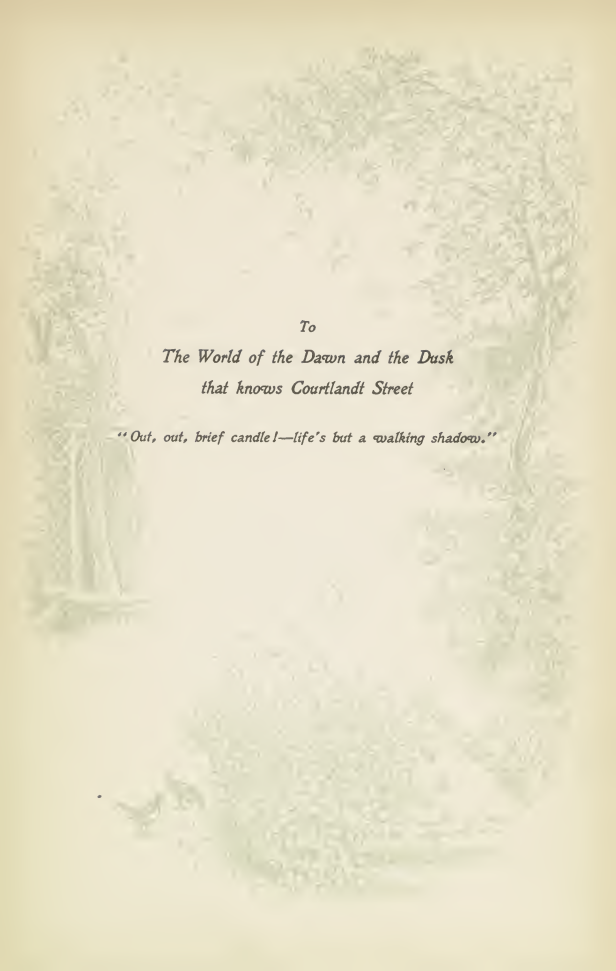
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To
The World of the Dawn and the Dusk
that knows Courtlandt Street

"Out, out, brief candle!—life's but a walking shadow."

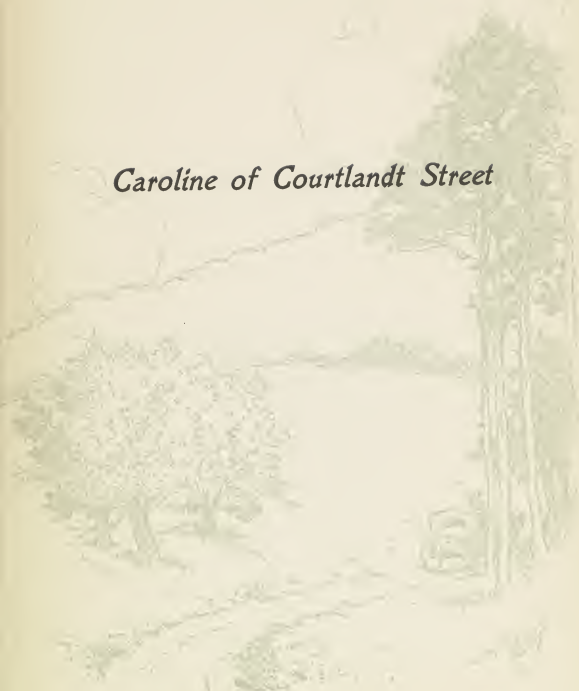
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I

Candles of the Old Park Theatre

THE girl leaned out of the gray, weather-stained balcony and hummed a quaint, rollicking air. A wave of sunshine slipped over the hipped roof of the Georgian house, touched her hair with lambent flame, and carpeted the town-green, where a kingdom of rose leaves, escaped from a stately near-by garden, were dancing before the wind like Titania's madcap fairies. Beyond that green—the city's bowling-green when good, stolid Anne of England dowered St. Peter's with a silver communion-service—stood the great houses of Perth Amboy's golden days. Like a procession of smirking dowagers sure of going to court, they ambled away to the smooth-flowing Raritan, trailing in their wake paths of oyster-shells, sweet plots and pleas-

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aunces, and high box-hedges, through which the summer bees murmured ceaselessly at hurrying time

She glanced at them down the long vista of High Street with a half-yearning look in her eyes. Genteel ladies, leaders of society in East New Jersey's once proud capital, walked there to and from the market, with black Abigails following at proper distances. Scores of wine-glass willows, grotesquely resembling feather-dusters, waved before burnished windows. Scores of prim, gilt knockers simpered at the sun. "I long to leave my native bowers, the wicked charmer said," sang the fresh voice. Then a dark-coated figure was seen entering Peacock Arcade, an approach to the green, and in an instant "the show-case," as the wits had dubbed the balcony of the old Terrill mansion, was deserted.

Many a maid in the past had loved that heaven-spaced trysting-spot, where an aged cape jasmine shook its starlike clusters into a protecting screen for lovers and prying busybodies. One entered and left it by a square hall, in reality a powdering-closet, where the Terrill belles of giddy Franklin's reign used to repair for a final adjustment of their tresses and last light touches of Mr. Hugh Gaine's "Bloom of Circassia" and "Pearl Lustre." The

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subtle potent enchantments of vanished years lay over the place. Worn wainscot still showed the pressure of white hands, which had once waved witchingly before the eyes of pretty fellows—now heedless of all coquetry in the garden of rest behind St. Peter's. A broken girandole clung to the wall as if loath to leave the scene of former triumphs. Even the shadows were older than most shadows, and fragrant with the dusty odors of bergamot and lavender escaped from secret cupboards.

In this dim retreat Rose Whitebush stood silent, the gay song dead on her lips. As she paused under the tarnished girandole, she seemed a figure of the ancient setting and a world apart from those mincing ladies on the green. Jersey-men of the Cotton Mather school would have styled her luxuriant brown hair "a bunch of vanity," for it rippled back from her low forehead in the fashion of a court beauty's head-dress. Amboy snickered at it politely, but envied the flowing locks beloved by wind and sunshine. "What could you expect from the daughter of an actress—a mere strolling player?" So old Mrs. Grundy said. After such a remark, possessors of neat pomatum-bound tresses dangled them discreetly. Those harmless hirsute orna-

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ments crowning the good ladies of Amboy had received a prodigious amount of exercise since the Whitebushes had arrived in the town. They shook when Colonel Whitebush took the mail-coach for Philadelphia, and left his daughter alone with her strange-looking companion for constantly lengthening fortnights. That Whitebush minx seen walking with a son of "a first family" caused them to wave with a tempestuous violence. And it is said that unfortunate têtes or patches nearly fell off if their owners chanced to catch the scornful lights in the deep-blue eyes of the grotesquely garbed daughter of the once renowned Sallie Lowe as she flitted through the flowering haunts of Jersey quality.

To-day the girl wore a thin mull dress, covered with pink rosettes or love-knots, which may have hidden a few patches and darns. Sighing so soon after singing, she pulled back the curtain separating the powdering-closet from the Terrill drawing-room and turned from a shade into a living woman—a woman half a child, mayhap, still pursuing the wilding spring. The color of the arbutus touched her cheeks and lips, and her changeful, April eyes glowed with unfathomed mysteries. All the beauty of the first shy evening

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stars was theirs, made softer by the bruise of storms.

Now they widened as she gazed at a figure fumbling with a broken gravy-boat on the chimney-piece.

"Jeminy!" she called, reproachfully.

"How looks the town of long-tongued ladies and long-nosed gentlemen, my dear?" answered the woman, endeavoring to hide the piece of china-ware in the folds of her queer, voluminous dress

"Oh, Jeminy!" the girl repeated, paying no heed to her question. "You promised not to worry over the family fortune-pot, and yet the moment I go away you take it down—"

"And find but two silver dollars and a mutilated fip which one can't spend," put in the other, tragically.

Rose Whitebush's voice broke into a laugh, for it was impossible to keep from laughing if Miss Jemima Diddle chose to increase the mirth of the world. There was something irresistibly funny about the exaggerated grimaces of the tall, angular creature. Her manners could never have been formed anywhere but in a green-room—one of those dim recesses where the follies of mankind are good-naturedly burlesqued in miniature. When her eyes were serious, you vowed her thin

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lips were mocking you. There was always some feature a trifle askew to give her face a whimsical look. The years she spent slaving for "the Darling of the Park," Rose's mother, had made her half a Thespian. Every hour of the day she trod imaginary boards as pitifully out of accord with her life as a Phyllis costume on an aged crone. In the morning it was "a shilling's worth of fresh butter, Mr. Scruggins," or "a twopenny bottle of milk, Mr. Bodkin"; and the voice that asked for these commonplace commodities was as entreating as a young Rosalind's. Indeed, she assumed all the rôles once acted by the members of Mr. Dunlap's company of old American comedians, and could run the gamut of emotions like an Oldmixon. She deared and double-deared friends and strangers, oftentimes causing the flush of youth to color the paunches of sedate gentlemen. She God-blessed you with the fervor of a general-utility lady hunting a situation. And her fine rendering of the Sneerwell manner in St. Peter's on a Sabbath morning would have caused solemn-faced Melpomene to topple off her pedestal from mirth.

Suddenly the full meaning of the situation seemed to dawn upon the girl. "Father has been away almost a month. Not a word from him,"

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she whispered, as if speaking to herself. "We might starve here in this hulk of a building—this Terrill Castle, as Amboy fondly calls it—where the rats get the most out of life, and he would still sleep over his punch-bowl at the Indian Queen. I don't mean to be hard on him," she continued, sinking her voice very low, "but something must be done. We cannot open a dames' school, for all the town knows mother's name. Why, there's not a woman stands ready to give us lace to wash or a turban to trim—and if there were one, I should not thank her."

A silence fell upon the room, broken only by the starling in the large wicker-cage hanging before the window-ledge. "Conk-quer-rée!" it called, sawing out the shrill notes. Neither answered it, and the flocks of tropical birds in the fast-fading tree-tops of the woodland-papered walls gazed at the gaudy vermilion-tinted thing mournfully.

"I might marry," *Jemima* soliloquized. "I'm past the age for a first choice, but the tallow chandler pressed my hand when I purchased a pound of wicks last Thursday."

"You old dear!" said her companion, awakening from a reverie. The shadows left her face and for a moment the eyes danced with merriment. "When you say things like that I always

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‘think what a comfort you must have been to mother.’

“They used to perk her up a bit.”

“I’m beginning to understand,” sighed the girl, “the way she felt in those first cruel weeks when she found father’s family would not recognize her.”

“Lor, child!” answered the woman, clasping her large, almost masculine hands convulsively; and you knew by the way the tears tinged her smiles there was an Irish progenitor somewhere. “Lor, child! she had no need of a Jeminy then.”

Rose bent forward eagerly.

“How it all comes back to me! I remember the last night she did *Belinda* at the new theatre. When the third act came the house was going wild over her. ‘Put another row of candles along the stage, Hutchinson, you old screw!’ called Nickey Fish, a great town man, from the Shakespeare box. They named the boxes in those days, and there was a Congreve, a Middleton, and a whole ring I have forgotten. ‘Hurrah for *Belinda*! Let us see the jade!’ roared the pit.”

“I can hear them!” exclaimed Rose, excitedly.

“Such a stamping of feet and a clash of voices! Below stairs it was as bad. The green-room was

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crowded and I stood guard by your mother's dressing-room door with Macbeth's old wooden sabre ready to pummel the first jackanapes who put his head through the opening."

"It's in the attic now, dreaming of past glories."

"All through the piece she was that frightened—like a hare in a bag, and would not see any one. 'Bravo, Sallie Lowe!' whispers Dunlap, the stage-manager, by the key-hole. 'Will you speak to that blackguard, Greenleaf, who runs the *Argus*?' 'I can't, Dunny,' says your mother, and I plant myself closer to the opening. Later Margaret Dunlap creeps to the door and she takes the child in and gives her a trinket from her neck. 'You look like an angel,' the mite of a thing says. Then your mother cries and kisses her, and draws me closer and kisses me, for that was the night of the elopement and she knew that she might never see us again."

"Poor little mother!" said the girl, softly.

"In the fourth and last act Belinda in travelling-dress goes off the stage in a chair, waving a good-bye to the audience. The men who carried Mrs. Duer's stout sedan—Dunlap bought it when her things were auctioned in Princess Street—had been bribed by your father, who jumps in by the wings and bids the fellows make for Theatre

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Alley. 'Belinda! Belinda! Come on!' yell the box-lobby swaggerers. I think I see the crazy, broken thing bumping through the black night now, while Dunlap and the call-boy, with a mob at their heels, make for the dressing-room where I still stand, to insist on dragging her out. 'She's gone!' I cry, half sobbing. 'She's gone to be married to Mr. Robert Whitebush!' 'You scrawny, good-for-nothing idiot!' screams Dunny, who was an awful man in a heat. 'You worm! Why did you let her leave the boards where her future lay?' 'I didn't, sir,' says I. 'Twas love let her.'"

Rose left her low seat by the window and came out into the sunlight again. "You make me forget this dull life," she cried. "I see nothing but lights—the lights of the Park beckoning to me, and in their midst mother smiles."

The passion in Jeminy's voice died away. "Five years passed ere I saw her again. I lost my place at the theatre owing to Mrs. Hallam's tantrums, and became a dresser at Wignall's in Philadelphia. 'Oh, Jeminy!' says she, half sobbing when we met face to face in Major Hunt's tavern over at Paulus Hook. 'One heap of luggage bound north and the other south,' calls the guard to a postilion. Her arms were half choking

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my neck. 'Oh, Jeminy! my light went out at the dear old Park that night. I ruined him with his family, and love does not thrive on air. He's been to their house in Courtlandt Street to-day to make a last appeal, and they've turned him off like a dog. We're journeying into Jersey where it's cheap living. Oh, Jeminy darling! If you were going with us I would not be so low-spirited.' On that you, close by in a broken theatre hat-box, lets up such a wail that I take you to my breast, and the warmth of your tiny body steals straight into my crusty heart. 'I'll turn about and go with you,' I mutter, brokenly, for I hated to look in her pitiful face. 'I'll stay with you always, and never leave you.' But you see, dear, for the years love burned she did not need me."

"I would not have been like her," whispered the girl, burying her head on Jeminy's shoulder. "Love should not have lured me from the boards! The Park is my only love—the dear old Park!"

II

Highway Weeds and Roses

A FAINT whistle wavered on the air, and the two women left the oaken window-seat where the garden was sending up its sweetest breaths. As the girl drew away the tearful sparkle in her eyes grew harder, and a crimson flush bloomed in her cheeks.

"Jepson Barker is beyond the hedge whistling for me. He would not dare treat any one of recognized position in such a manner."

"Even the fish fags of the water-front talk of his infatuation for you," said Jeminy. "The heir of Amboy's oldest house—his is a name to conjure with!"

Rose did not answer, and her silence conveyed the impression of a score of protestations. She could see through the window to the south walk, where a short, dark young man was flecking the bushes with his riding-whip. He seemed to be deeply agitated, and was making rapidly towards

Highway Weeds and Roses

the house. There was something about the youth's face that chilled the girl. Admirers thought it resembled the great Corsican's, although this was only whispered in Amboy, as the name of Napoleon Bonaparte was not highly esteemed by many of the inhabitants. Others saw a falcon-like, sinister expression that boded evil. Old Madam Barker was wont to say that Jepson favored her Holbein of the Earl of Perth—that passionately proud gentleman who demanded as many bobs and kowtows as his sad-faced king.

The young man paused under a gigantic willow that had grown from a small slip brought from the white Contoits Garden by the late Tom Terrill, to serve as a reminder of pleasant hours spent there with his honored friend, Doc Goldsmith. Unaware that a pair of eyes were gazing at him from above, he straightened the red silk sham, creasing his tippy coat, before turning into the door-path. The door was open and he tapped on it with the butt end of his whip.

Rose started slightly at the sound, then she crept softly through the powdering-closet to the balcony.

"Good-morning, sir," she called, bowing low, with an airy, half-scornful grace.

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"You see I've come back as I said I would," he laughed.

She did not answer.

The door slammed below. There was the faint tap of footsteps. A patch of blue broke through the jasmine-vine and two eager eyes tried to catch hers.

The silence was still unbroken.

Jepson Barker put his arm about one of the old pilasters and leaned forward.

"'Tis no again," said the girl, suddenly, meeting his gaze. "'Twill be no to-morrow and every day that dawns. Oh, can't you go and leave me?" Her voice had an entreating note.

"I've set my heart on you," he answered, sullenly. A derisive nod answered him.

"Rose, be kind to me!"

"Look," she said, waving her slender little hand upward to the sunlight flashing on the trees, the piping, care-free birds, and swaying down towards the roses upon roses beneath their balcony. "My love must have all that, else it will not be my love."

"Our lands stretch half a mile up the river," he muttered, uncomprehendingly.

Two dewlike tears brushed her lashes — two tears for him.

"I brought Lord Mahoun's patent for you to

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see. In time all that part of Jersey mapped there will be mine. Marry me, and you shall laugh at those who treat you with scorn. I will make a lady of you—the finest lady in the land. The name of Barker will be the setting for your beauty.”

Her changeful face had clouded at his first words, and now her poor gown acquired a new dignity as she moved away.

“I must decline the honor,” she said, mockingly. “For all the houses in Amboy, for all the ships that sail the Raritan, for all the jewels Captain Kidd is reputed to have stored under the subterranean vaults of yon Watson dwelling, I would not give you my little finger, sir!” A new note crept into her voice as she swept past him, but her eyes still flashed. “As for birth, ’tis only upstarts prate of ancestry. Some do not print their station on their coats—they’re too sure of it.”

“Fine-lady airs,” he sneered, his face choleric with indignation. “I’ll have your hand yet.” He strode nearer to her, petulantly crushing his castor under his arm. “Have you forgotten that your father is in my debt? I hold his note long overdue, and it is my mercy only that keeps him from jail and you—”

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"From the almshouse," she taunted. "Oh, sir, you have a pretty fashion of wooing a maid. A most graceful fashion sure to please the coy, reluctant one. Your condescension in looking upon me is almost too great. Have you taken into consideration what Madam Barker will say? Have you thought of Amboy and the scandal that will fly from dwelling to dwelling?"

He was silent for a moment as he stepped back into the sunlight. When he spoke his voice held a touch of hauteur which infuriated her. "I care little for the stigma of the stage. It can be stuffed down their throats. I would that your mother had been a lady, but fate made her an actress."

He did not glance at her for half a moment, and when he did the faint trace of the gallant had left him. His whip fell to the floor, causing the starling to scold and chatter. Never before in his plethoric career had he seen such indignation. Rage did not often enter the sacred precincts of the Barker castle, where each day was a replica of its previous soft-footed sister. Some little murmur might arise—some small disquietude—to spoil for an hour the harmonies of daily life. A chiding voice or a prayerful request was all Madam Barker ever offered her son and heir.

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Here was a typhoon to confront, and he knew only timorous zephyrs.

"How dare you speak her name!" she cried. "Fate that branded my mother in your eyes has made a ditch between us. 'Tis wide, sir, and the mire is deep. Know you that same Fate is a fickle jade. When my coach rides by on one side, you shall be on the other, walking. La, sir! I shall gaze out of my coach window and mistake you for a running footman. And if you watch you'll see me dash over the downs to that fair country—that dear country where he waits—my own true lover. The founding of this Perth Town may be in *Poor Richard's Almanac* as one of the world's great events, but to me 'tis a place of little consequence. I would not give a sprig of peppermint to dance in Captain Bagatelle's new ballroom. You're all of you second-rate, worm-eaten gentry. Faith, you'd better beware or the grubs will eat out your hearts."

"Your father shall sing a different tune," he choked, in his excitement. "He will look upon me in another light—when I help him to remember these papers. Not card debts this time, but borrowed plumes—the daily toddy he offers to cronies at The Queen, his stage

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rides, the very clothes on his back have been paid for by me. And why? Because I love you, Rose. You are my Rose. A wild Rose, perhaps, but, egad! you will bloom well in a cultivated garden. Until Colonel Whitebush returns I content myself with wafting a kiss." His little eyes were leering, and yet in their depths there were sparks of a chivalrous admiration.

The girl drew closer to the window, turning her back upon him, and gathering the old love-knot-strewn gown about her. She was rigid as he strode angrily from the room.

"Cultivated garden," she laughed, as Jeminy came tiptoeing out of the back passageway. "I would be a highway weed before I entered his."

Then her face changed. The April eyes began to flash again. Seizing Lord Mahoun's grant which he had left, she dashed through the powdering-closet to the balcony.

"Here's the key to a stretch of dreary lands," she cried, raising it aloft. "There pride, greed, and all the other virtues grow. Fly away, for you cannot tempt me!" She moved to the railing and flung it to the ground, where it fluttered saucily at Jepson Barker's feet.



III

Under the Terrill Eaves

WHEN twilight came, Jeminy went out to make their frugal purchases for the morrow. After the garden gate clicked and the scurrying figure vanished behind a clump of boxwood, Rose Whitebush threw down her sewing and ran to the foot of the attic stairs.

Jeminy has taken it lightly, the girl reflected; she knows father would not force me to marry the odious wretch. Suppose, though—she paused with her hand on the first baluster—suppose he comes home penniless. A blush of indignation crept over her face. "The Barkers would not dare send him to prison," she said, aloud.

The darkness was filling the great, silent house, curtaining the cracked walls and plastering with pompous shadows the worn rosewood chairs that ordinarily looked like a timorous group of poor relations. Aged beams in walls and ceilings, that never voiced their complaints in the daylight,

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creaked soft protestations. Rats began to hold carnival behind the wainscot.

Rose glanced over her shoulder as one does, unconsciously, in a lonely place. All her nerves were quivering. With a quick motion she crouched nearer the railing and listened. The hall-door shook slightly. "Father!" she called. There was no answer. Not one unsteady footstep. Only the night wind could be heard crooning to the giant hawthorn-bush by the porch.

Seizing her soft skirts, she ran lightly up the long spiral sweep of steps. Pushing open the stout oaken door, she stood by a queer conical window, resembling a cocked hat, through which the dying sun poured a wealth of molten gold.

The Terrill attic was like many of its kind in old Perth Amboy. Perhaps Jeminy and Selima, the free black girl who came once a day to help with the house-work, had made its floor a trifle cleaner than was usual for a rubbish heap, but there was the same array of tired and maimed things to be met with under every ancient roof-tree.

A two-legged gouty stool mounted on a celaret was as good as one of Dr. Boresome's sermons on the folly of high living. Three gay Paris bandboxes, which still held the moth-

Under the Terrill Eaves

eaten head-gear of three somebodies, smirked in true French fashion, seemingly desirous of fascinating although in the beldam period. Down a lane of pig-skins, purchased in London by wild young Terrills on the grand tour, were a broken coach-wheel and part of a silver-garnitured harness gibbeted for posterity. "Lud, sirrah!" they seemed to say. "The Terrills were people of prodigious consequence, and never walked when there was a possibility of riding. Although they died in debt to our maker, Ross of York, he was grateful for the patronage of ladies and gentlemen who lived, married, and departed from this sphere all in the finest fashion."

Maria Terrill's chamber mirror—pock-marked Maria, the haughtiest female of the family—had a corner to itself. Behind it was a little walled-in graveyard of torn fans, flower-bottles, and bent bodkins or hair-pieces—articles that had caused heart flutters in their day. There was a doll, too, in a gown crumpled from tears or rain-drops, and a dog-eared tome called *A Lady's Beautifier*.

Oh, weary back-stair wenches who worked your fingers to the bone for those fine Terrill belles, so much given to tantrums and ratings, if you could steal back to your earthly haunts to-

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day you would have a choice of vanities! The bits of ribbon with sprigs of floxinella or tufts of memory-sweet, and the masqueraded round-robins for the neck! The peaked pumps, sunshades, and pauncet-boxes! All the frail causes of envy and sighs lay together in a heap, topped by the old beauty recipe book that failed in keeping your mistresses' pink cheeks and bright eyes from fading.

Apart from the Terrills' sublunary effects stood the old Park Theatre trunk, pulled by Jeminy's strong arms to an eminence of smoothly laid, mutilated bedposts and table-tops. It was a square wooden enclosure painted blue and clamped with iron roses and whatnots. On one of the handled sides were the initials "S. L.," followed by the nearly obliterated words, "Greenwich Street Theatre." Underneath, in bolder, fresher lettering, was "John Street Theatre," and it did not take the observer long to decide that "S. L." had gone from Gotham's summer home of the drama to the loftier temple of Thespis, presided over by the once noted managers Hodgkinson & Dunlap.

The marks of S. L.'s shoes labelled the lid, for in the old days stage-coach travellers always had their trunks put under the seats allotted to them.

Under the Terrill Eaves

They were very tiny heel-tops, yet they stamped a personality upon the receptacle, and you knew at a glance that some one feminine once kept the trunk's key tied in a silken ribbon knot—some one arch and winsome, who could toy with a flower or give a gurgling laugh that would have enchanted bewigged Sheridan and all his fastidious school.

Rose unfastened the window, letting in the cool night air, fragrant with white jasmine. Then she glanced about the attic until her eyes rested upon the lonely trunk, bathed in the full glow of the dying sunlight. Creeping to it as if afraid of startling the sleeping worlds in the mouldy corners of the place, she knelt and laid her hot head on the lid.

"Poor little mother!" she whispered, talking incoherently to the thing as if it were capable of giving sympathy. "He said he'd make me a lady. Were you surrounded by Barkers, dear? People that sneered at your name and place as you chanced to loiter by? Did you meet with snubs at every lane and crossing—eyes that tried to push you from the common path—even out of church? Did you long to turn about and crush them? Oh, you Barkers all over the earth, how I loathe you!"

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She had risen to her feet again. "He wants me for a pretty bit of clay, but if I married him it would kill Madam Barker. A hundred times a day she would say, 'She can't drink tea genteelly, for her mother was an actress. Her voice is so loud—pray excuse it, for her mother was an actress. She walks this way or that way owing to her origin.' I know how it would be," she cried, "even if I did sell myself to you, Jepson Barker."

The trunk and its contents were the girl's dearest possession—the only legacy left by her mother. Pushing back the lid in her stress of emotion, there fell upon the jasmine-scented, tomblike air a new perfume—a frail, sad odor whispering of dim old theatres, snuffed candles, and masks cast aside. The last sunbeams spying the shimmer of paste on satin, brocade, and paduasoy, seemed reluctant to leave, and lured the jewelled garments into such a glorious realm of radiance that the lovely ladies who once wore them must have smiled in that far-off world near Aganippe, where a tender muse leads them after their too brief hours on the boards.

Rose knew all the gowns, and from her earliest childhood Jemima had told her something of their stories. The fine, pearl-colored lustring and

Under the Terrill Eaves

blue taffeta petticoat were worn by Lady Teazle when Sallie Lowe played the part to Hallam's Sir Peter. Jemima, in a fit of stage longing, had put it on once in the past and mouthed the lines. Rose remembered nothing of the incident but her indignation and Jeminy's daring—it seemed a sacrilege to touch the dead little mother's finery even after a lapse of years. The picture of two large prunella boots leering boldly from beneath the brocade swept back to her, and she laughed a joyous laugh such as "the Darling of the Park" might have uttered if Sir Peter's antics chanced to tickle her fancy. The eyes so cruelly afraid on the stairs, so bright but a moment ago, were soft and limpid now.

A white hand slipped into a hidden pocket and drew forth a miniature partly imprisoned in a yellowing missive. The face was that of a young girl looking out of a parted curtain—a dainty, arch countenance remarkable for that same buoyancy of expression in the early portraits of Peg Woffington. In the background there was a glint of serene sky touched by storm clouds and coming night. "To Belinda, from her friend and admirer, William Dunlap," was written on the other side—words made pitiful by being traced in human hair.

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

Warm red lips touched the crystal imprisoning the loved features, then hastily glancing at the missive, a letter penned by Miss Whitlock, who played some years in America, to Mr. Hodgkinson, recommending her friend Miss Lowe as a talented portrayer of first young women, Rose put the ivory back in its hiding-place and commenced lifting out the garments—carefully placing them on a strip of bed valance lest they should become soiled.

What a flaunting mass of finery they made, flaming and flashing through all the category of colors!—gowns that were showy and dashing for Amanda in “A Trip to Scarborough,” and simple silken things with “daisies pied and violets blue” for poor Ophelia; costumes possessing some of the mannerisms and graces of the characters for whom they were fashioned; daffodil shades that enchanted; pale blues and other soft colors that wooed and whispered of the pretty passion; reds and sun tints that were brazenly bewitching. There were no sombre shades among them, for the one who wore the garments had only gazed at autumn as one views a picture.

Soon the trunk was nearly empty. The last sunbeams were slipping away on invisible feet, and in the half-light the Terrill possessions peered

Under the Terrill Eaves

enviously at the pile as they began their retreat into oblivion. But one dress remained next to the gaudily flowered lining. A white affair sprinkled with silver stars, and by it a small packet of papers and a netted purse, through which could be seen the glint of gold pieces.

The girl seized the packet. Some ecstatic idea was evidently formulating in her brain. After perusing the papers eagerly, she turned to a torn red book and thumbed its pages until she found the one she sought.

"Just the same age!" came the ejaculation, after a momentary pause.

"I see the coach I told him of—and it won't be a dream coach!"

Her cheeks were growing hotter as she peered at the pages. "I'll do it," she called, aloud. "I'll show them what a fine lady Sallie Lowe's daughter can be!"

IV

The Child of a Great Actress

FOR some minutes Rose sat very still, both arms listless in her lap. The dream flitted across her face and its last footstep was a smile. Then a new desire swayed her, and, grasping the gown in the trunk, she arose.

The night wind could be heard sweeping over the tide-troubled Raritan, through the river-reeds, the elm and honey-locust larches, the stately processions of box where the gray moths gathered to dance till broad moonshine, and across the bowling-green to die in lanes and skittle-alleys.

She listened to the breath of violins and haut-boys in its sighing. Louder they grew until the dim attic was full of long-lost melodies. The wooing of countless Juliets spoke in it—the vows of a legion of Romeos. It came upon her wild heart like the calm beauty of the night. Fancy caught the sounds and kept them. Above them all was her mother's voice whispering words the

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girl had often conned. Throwing the gown loosely about her slender form, she stepped to the window, and, with a strange throbbing at her breast, began speaking the lines to tangles of snowy phlox, pale, luminous primroses, and maids' blossom, Juliet's own flower.

"Give me my Romeo; and when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of Heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night."

And now she was not herself, but that daughter of the Capulets in far-off Verona. Her voice was full of the hunger of youth—the yearning to escape from the sequestered lane into the great highway. She was like a shade-nurtured field flower sighing for the glowing meadow spaces where the sun is hottest.

There was a lull in the wind, and the starling could be heard calling, plaintively, "Conquer-rée!" At the attic door stood Jeminy, breathless from her long climb. Her mouth was twitching violently, and the wicker market-basket seemed in danger of falling from her relaxed arm. Unable to control herself longer, she gave an hysterical gasp—something peculiar to herself—between a sob and a sneeze.

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"Jeminy!" said the girl, turning, her voice very low and intense. "Jeminy, I can act!"

"Lack-a-daisy," laughed the woman, as if trying to parley with an invisible foe.

"To-night in the darkness it came to me. I have always longed for it—prayed for the gift. Alone in the attic, thinking of the low plane where fate has brought us, and the results of the day, my whole being took fire. A thing inside me seemed to rise and say: 'The more you crush me, world, the greater I shall grow. The hurt and the wounds must blossom. Even the snow-drops break through a frozen soil.' And then mother's old Juliet dress called me. 'Here's a way to escape,' it said. 'Your only way.'"

Sallie Lowe's faithful servant tried to control her agitation.

"You darling, you get it from her. Sure don't I know the feeling when my uncle's aunt was cousin to the great Colley Cibber. I haven't much of it, but what I have, God save it; and one drop of actor blood in the body is as bad as a Chinese rocket. Out it pops some fine day when you're least expecting it. Then you're sure to run off to the stage or play tricks on your husband—and if you're not that lucky, play

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tricks on yourself by turning your old duds and pretending they're new."

The April eyes opposite were smiling, and Rose was about to speak, when Jemima stumbled across the room, raising one hand warningly.

"Your mother wanted me to keep you from it, dear. The night she died in Trent's town, says she to me, looking all the while at you sleeping peacefully: 'Jem, girl, don't let her go on unless you're forced to, for it cuts off all other roads in life.' She was thinking of Courtlandt Street. It always was Courtlandt Street in her mind then. Poor lamb, it broke her heart that your father should have been disinherited on her account! 'Make her a lady, Jem—a nice, sweet home bird, sure to say yes to the first good man who asks her. Keep her away from gypsydom. The footlights always burn a woman, and the day might dawn when the scars would show. And if the time ever arrives when she can no longer be stayed, tell her of me—of Courtlandt Street and the scars which could not be hidden.'"

"That's why you kept her play-books from me. I guessed it long ago even in the early Brunswick days. Perhaps I never would have read them if father had not torn "Major André"

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out of my hand and destroyed it before my very eyes. I remember it happened on my fourteenth birthday, just the age when one feels most keenly. 'Lookee here, child, have done with such rubbish,' he said, and rip went the paper. Out of the window flew the sheets touched by her own dear fingers, and André—her lover—my first hero, was gone forever. After that I read all I could find. To my childish mind I was showing allegiance to her and scorn of Courtlandt Street."

"I'm afraid I've failed in bringing you up—such a malapert as you be. Why, Courtlandt stands for all that is respectable, at least the side your father's people live on. That's where you could have been instructed in the gentilities. I've heard your aunts measure their actions by a yardstick."

"'Tis I who will teach Courtlandt Street," said the girl, her eyes flashing.

Jemima glanced at her radiantly.

"Yes," Rose exclaimed. "That is where I play my first part."

The other's face was pursed up in wonderment, yet she noted the treble in the fresh young voice foretelling fires about to flame.

"For years it has let us drift—denied us our rights. Now is the time to float to port."

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"The way is too rough, darling, and what do you know of the place?"

"What do I know of it? Haven't I had a picture of it in my mind's eye ever since I first heard my mother's story—first looked into my father's face and saw the marks of its cruel hands! Ah, daddy! He might have been different but for his one journey into our world. 'Gypsydom,' mother called it. And he might have been worse," she added, the soft note leaving her voice. "Oh, Courtlandt Street, with your sneering, snickering houses, prouder by far than any old rookery on High Street, in my dreams I have seen you, and the haughtiest one of all was the home of my august relatives!"

Here she swept a mocking curtsey.

"And the Whitebushes moulded like first cousins of the Barkers, only a hundredfold finer than any Jersey quality—the hawk-beaked, keen-eyed Whitebushes. They've strong Spanish and Tartar snuff always ready to keep off the smell of the common people. In their dark closets are phials of camphor-water waiting to revive them after a walk abroad. They must have fires burning all day, winter and summer, to prevent their pride freezing up their hearts. Off, off! they cry, to any human birds but pea-

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

cocks. Only those with tails get into our roost—only those with tails!”

“Lor’!” said her listener, her breath coming faster.

The low-voiced Juliet was suddenly metamorphosed into a madcap thing—something sylphlike, half a pixy, dashing invisible wings against the rafters of the dim old attic while the one candle throbbed to her heart-beats.

“Pride shall mock at pride. It will be a comedy of revenge with only fine lady parts, and, Jeminy, dear, you shall be my second. A play grown out of an empty family fortune-pot, a plot to cheat that baggage poverty who waits below at our mouldy door. But she won’t get in, she can’t. This little red book will save us from her clutches,” and she stooped low to the trunk and seized the volume that she had perused so eagerly.

Visions were enshrouding both women. One was looking back into the past, the other, with all the hot impetuosity of youth, had torn away the veil which hides the inscrutable future. Under that alien roof-tree, surrounded by the fading finery of “the Darling of the Park,” the trammels of the flesh fell away, and two spirits drank of the dream-lust—that mystical wander-



"THE LOW-VOICED JULIET WAS SUDDENLY METAMORPHOSED INTO A
MADCAP THING"

The Child of a Great Actress

lust made of sweet poppy-juices and leaves of lotus sure to dim the present.

Jemima, blanched with bewilderment, saw a new Sallie Lowe rise before her. Each trick of the voice, each gesture was that of the dear ghost she loved. It was as if all the dead roses of all her dead yesterdays suddenly bloomed again, but gave forth a perfume new and strange. This creature, subtle, impalpable, evanescent, led her into a dim labyrinth where she could only grope.

"A comedy for Courtlandt Street!" When she haunted that neighborhood, sick with longing for the old days, after Robert Whitebush had stolen the idol of her life, the place had seemed funereal enough. Did the child imagine that the Whitebushes would adopt her? Oh, God, the mockery of it! Did she intend journeying there to be turned away like her mother?

Two decades died, and she, Jemima Diddle, stood before that proud Whitebush house the imagination of the girl had so aptly described. The May-time rain beat against her dragged skirts, forcing her back from the Doric-columned porch. She saw the lights in the Whitebush windows now—lights that beckoned and lured for what? . . . Whiffs of lilac and calls of awa-

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

kened birds. . . . Where was her flower—her lady-bird? Only the courage born of despair could have led the humble theatre scully to that lordly gate—the hunger to know what had become of her darling. She voiced her plea to the melancholy black who answered the timorous knock. “Could they tell her the lodgings of Mrs. Robert Whitebush—Mrs. Whitebush that was Sallie Lowe? Her Sallie Lowe?” The man looked askance at her and left her standing outside clinging to a railing. How the thunder rumbled down the narrow, deserted street, growling like a pack of Jove’s watch-dogs escaped from some Stygian cavern! Then in a flash of lightning which illuminated all the dark spaces beyond the reach of sunshine and moonshine, she saw at the end of a corridor a haughty old gentleman angrily berating his Cæsar. “Tell her to look in Bedlam,” he roared. “We have no news of such a person.” Bedlam! Bedlam! It still echoed in her ears on the teeth of that long-distant storm.

As she looked at the flower of Sallie’s broken stem a sob shook her frame.

The girl, recalled from her fancy realm, turned and threw her strong young arms about the form, which in its present attitude of abandon

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showed the weight of years. Gone were the golden distances where she walked like a princess in a pantomime, opening doors to all the wasted wishes of her youth. That shy Prince Charming whose picture lies in every girl heart—the dream-lover some day bound to fight his way to her and carry her off in a coach-and-four—vanished behind the Terrill cellaret. After all, she was only a Cinderella of the attic trying to boost up her foster-mother, her green-room mother, who was as much of a legacy as the gowns that lay at her feet.

Neither spoke in that tender embrace.

"Sweet one—Sallie's child," whispered Jeminy, drawing back convulsively. "I don't know what you mean, but I'll try and follow you."

"Will you?" spoke the violet eyes. "To catch the Tartars," she said, aloud.

"Are geese equal to it?"

"Fortune will like them for their light of weight."

"And wit?"

"Ah, wit! We've too much of it in the land gone begging. Loud quacking will serve for my comedy. Come, let's gather up the dresses, Jeminy, and hie down to the drawing-room—soon to be our proper sphere."

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

She bent over and seized some of the gowns, and they swished and quavered in her lithe fingers with all the joy of expectancy.

Jeminy did likewise, holding aloft her candle.

"There's Lady Teazle's taffety just pining for a dash at the quality and a rustle at a handsome gentleman. Mrs. Macbeth's nightcap will hang fine in a Whitebush closet and serve to scare the curious away from family skeletons. We're the skeletons; but, faith, we'll come in such a pretty disguise the most knowing of the household will never know us."

The girl raised high the red book above her waving hair, and then with a buoyant motion pressed it to her heart. "Here's to Caroline," she called, merrily kissing her hand to an invisible presence, "and if the angels above us ever laugh may they get one little peep at her. Here's to Caroline, the sauciest jade that ever went to Buckingham and crossed the seas to be stung by a mosquito. The saints preserve you, attic child, and help you down-stairs into the world."

"Caroline!" exclaimed Jeminy, in a daze, her voice ending in an interrogative chuckle as she repeated the strange name—"Caroline?"

Below on the jasmine-strung window-ledge

The Child of a Great Actress

the starling, made happy by the coming of the night, no longer chirped sadly but called in a whimsical fashion, "Jeminy, wake up! Jeminy, wake up!"



V

Castle To-Morrow

“**A**LICIA WHITEBUSH, her book,” read Rose, dramatically, standing in the centre of the room.

Jeminy had spread the gowns over chairs and tables, lighted the Rumford lamp, and was now seated on a chest fumbling with her hands. So great was her excitement she was unconsciously tying a house-cap over her turban. Her eyes were upon the leaf the girl was turning.

“She was my grandmother,” said the fresh voice. “I vow she gave this tome to father as a keepsake; he being a Whitebush, and sure of his quality, cast it aside one fine day and mother found it and saved the thing for me. A host of Whitebushes descended from the Black Prince and other proud personages sleeping in a theatre trunk. Sure ’tis a merry jest!”

“For Lord’s sake mouth it,” urged her listener.

“La,” laughed the minx, turning the page

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at last, "here comes Caroline! Clara Louise Caroline Didear Whitebush, daughter of Lord Peter Whitebush and Lady Charlotte Vickers, born August 26, 1806, Cloudesly Castle, Sussex."

"Your birth, year and day," whispered the other.

"And Caroline's! The same stars shone upon us both through all the years. I like not the Clara, which sounds mawkish, and Louise is far too pretty, but Caroline is a perfect, high-sounding, slap-you-in-the-face name. I could string a world of airy crochets on a Caroline—white kid gloves and black satin bonnets for breakfast. I'm sure all her blushes are on her blush-colored satins, and she has stiff little yew-trees embroidered round her bodice to keep the gallants at a distance. I'll go to Courtlandt Street as Caroline. 'Twill suit the place. The Honorable Caroline Whitebush, of Cloudesly Castle! Make way there, sirs."

"Are you mad?" said Jeminy, a depth of entreaty in her voice.

The bubble of a derisive note answered her.

"Lack of pence drives one to strange lodgings. Courtlandt Street must shelter us until I brave—" She hesitated.

"Brave what?"

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"The stage—the dear old Park where mother acted." Jeminy gasped. "Oh, I know you think me a hare-brained girl, but it's the only way to escape." She jumped to it. "We'll find Mr. Dunlap."

"Dunny! My Dunny—your mother's Dunny—he will know at a glance. He can tell how near you are to a Farren or an Abington."

Jeminy's eyes danced with excitement.

"Though he never let me on—not even as a jumping-girl—I bear him small malice. 'Jemima,' he would say, perking up after I had been more teasing than usual, 'keep your place. You're our best dresser, and without you Sallie Lowe would be reddening her nose and whitening her cheeks. There are many at the front who could not stand a gallery shower-bath. 'Tis true there's money in it for the busters Hallam and Oldmixon at twenty-five dollars a week, but look at the twenty-five-shilling army. Think of the fire-flies and then the stars.'"

"Would that he could gaze at you in your first rôle," said Rose, slipping from her chair and nestling close to Jeminy's knees. "Lydia Condor or Clarissa Wildairs, which shall it be? The second name is a droll conceit—a sentimental guardian who bites. You shall wear feathers in your

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hair that scrape the sky like the plumes at George's court, and when I remark what a small place York is, you say, 'Oh, wondrous small after Lunnon,' and give your head a toss to sweep the words from unruly tongues. 'Tish, a woman of consequence she is,' they'll cry. 'She wiggles her lappet like an empress.' Oh, la!"

The laugh died away. The other waited in wonderment.

"Listen," the girl whispered, raising herself on one arm. "Caroline Whitebush, third cousin of the American Whitebushes tires of dull London. The *Lady's Book* always says it is dull in August. She must have change, recreation, a trip abroad to save her from the vapors. She coaches it to Liverpool and embarks with her companion on a forty-day packet to Philadelphia. That would account for our crossing through Jersey. From that city 'tis but two days to York. Two days to Courtlandt Street. There she's housed till she finds Dunlap. Poor Carrie; she has but five gold pieces for the whole journey. Bits you never suspected, Jeminy. Little clinkers saved for a glimpse of the world!"

Rose jangled the purse joyously.

"Who'll wheel us?" the other asked, as if grasping the thing.

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"Heard will; I've only to have at him and the Lady Franklin takes the road."

Jeminy smiled unconsciously.

"One of these Jersey gentlemen must own a bit of the Blarney-stone and you've kissed it. So you think you can beguile old Heard?"

The girl saw her advantage. Turning, she pirouetted to the other side of the room, her slippers beating a mirthful tattoo. Grasping a large, leghorn straw hat covered with ragged robins that climbed up pertly to the high-steepled crown, she half tossed it to Jeminy's head and it caught on her back-comb, making her look like a Cheshire tabby ready for a garden-party. Over her protesting shoulders she flung a gauze scarf fine enough to have pleased all the young Marlows, Dashwoulds, and Lord Trinkets who had fingered it in the past. Grimacing at the mirror, she tucked a tall spray of osprey plume in her own brown tresses, mourning the sunlight. The roguish thing began to dance a rigadoun, and she placed some heavy-hearted flower beside it to act as a steadier when it tried to flit away.

"We're fine frigates now," she cried. "Bob, Clarissa—bob to the quality."

Jeminy's eyes opened wide, only to narrow again with unctuous humor. Like a string of

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decoy birds the future Caroline's airs and graces lured her thoughts into a wide sea of mirth, over which flitted dazzling chimeras one after another. The gypsy blood was stirring in her veins, urgent, entreating, rampant with desire. Rose's mood had caught her at last. The wells of longing covered by the heavy scales of past hardship were bursting. The shadow that had walked so many weary years in dark by-lanes vanished for a moment. An old Jemima revived. A creature of the theatre that sighed and prayed for a chance to brave the boards—a chance that never came.

Watching her mimicking the Amboy dames—old Miss Dalrymple who took one step to each ring of St. Peter's bell on a Sabbath, Mrs. Blake tapping her snuffbox in an absolute Boscowen manner, poor Miss Goldfinch fingering her blond lace cap with conscious pleasure because Sir William Franklin, the beau of the Jerseys, had complimented her on one of like pattern nigh fifty years before—the possibilities of the part unrolled themselves.

"Lawk, with a clear head I'm wild for it," she laughed. "Good-day to you, mistress. 'Tis fine weather we're having. Think you it will rain? Ah, my Siddos's curl—you like it?"

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

The president's lady copied it from me and declared she set the fashion. Hussy, would that I could wring her neck. Oh, Mr. Jones, how sweet you do talk! Think you it will rain to-morrow?"

The tones of her voice were inimitable—one moment seductive, the next redolent with playful satire. If you had not known her to be the queer companion of Colonel Whitebush's daughter, you would have sworn she had escaped from some High Street drawing-room, where the genteel world cackled between sips of elderberry.

Now the two smirked at each other like children of a Grandison. A comedy was being rehearsed—the strangest play that the old city of Amboy had ever witnessed. No ranting vampirer on the green in the days when strolling barnstormers sometimes found port there could have pictured such a saucy harlequinade.

Two first ladies gagging it alone. In the darkened flies stationed just beyond their gaze was the host of walking-people. Like queens of the real stage they gave them only scorn. Mountebanks, Jack-Puddings, clowns—all mummers, yet among them, carefully muffled, stalked some tragedians ready to spring and poniard.

Castle To-Morrow

The tropical birds in the dim walls looked startled, and as the voices rose and fell the starling fluttered about his cage. Outside the night was in its first heavy sleep. Sometimes a cricket chirped, or a bull-frog off in the waste-lands tried to croak a love ditty and then stopped suddenly as if ashamed of his tune. Even the wind-babies, left by their roaming, gusty mother in the jasmine-vine, swayed the flowers very softly, afraid that she might return and find them awake.

As the hour advanced, Jeminy began to refurbish some of the garments. A bit of fresh lace for a collar, a button added, or a stray rip caught by her watchful needle. She coddled them all lovingly, chattering as if they were old friends. "I know you, murky red brocade. It was you tripped Sallie up in the first act of 'The Taming of the Shrew.' And you, dainty gauze with the forget-me-nots. Ah, she looked like the understudy of an angel in you. Dunny said so, and even Oldmixon was forced to admit it. She knew, that Oldmixon, although she had a beast of a temper."

Never before had Rose expressed a desire to wear any of her mother's finery. Now she gloated over skirts and bodices which seemed

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

to have been made for her, so perfect were their lines.

"We need all for York," she cried, holding them up to her slender figure one after another. Then she began to fold each separately, sprinkling it with lavender sprigs recently culled from the garden.

"You cannot take the theatre trunk," said her companion.

"I know," answered the girl, musing for a moment, "but the Terrills have kindly left theirs in the attic. They've seen life, and been to court no doubt. They'll do for us."

Mounting the attic stairs again, she reappeared, dragging after her a huge leather affair that brought to one's mind a giddy old gentleman sheepishly looking for the obscured lane where he left his routs and roundelays. Turning the rusty key from somewhere in its lining, a little cloud of faded rose-leaves fell and lay strewn at her feet.

"See, Jeminy, it has a romance. Ah, old trunk, will you be glad of Castle To-Morrow? 'Tis far finer than a Terrill castle. What say you to a race with the clouds on the back of a great coach—a race with fate and a pair of fine ladies?"

Castle To-Morrow

"No answer—it's true to the Terrills and longs to call us jades."

One of the candles gutted, and yet the two in the room went on working industriously. Over the hills of the night the weak infant dawn was beginning to creep towards Castle To-Morrow. A few more hours and his ruddy hands would beat on windows and doors; a few more hours and his lusty voice would awaken the keepers. Too soon, alas! for most of the silver and golden roads one follows at night run adrift leagues away from the castle gates.

Suddenly, on the still night, there fell the sound of heavy footsteps and the first toss of a knocker.

Rose sprang from the floor. That same look of terror that had dilated her eyes earlier in the evening, when mounting the stairs, came to them again. The trunk lid, hastily released, fell to with a thud.

The hammering, rhythmically strident, seemed to be reaching her heart. She began tiptoeing to the powdering-closet, stumbling over the piles of fabrics.

"'Tis midnight by St. Peter's clock," said Jeminy, hoarsely. "They may be pirates from cut-throat alley. Some bold marauders tried the

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

Watson house at Whitsuntide. Let me go, dearie!"

"A pirate, yes—come to steal our dreams. Oh, I did not mean that if it should be—'tis hard to starve for everything—even dreams."

"I'll blow out the lights," called Jeminy.

The room in darkness, the girl swayed like a shadow through the passage leading to the balcony. There the moonlight climbed, ribbon-like, over the front of the house to a trysting-spot beyond the hazy pools of box. Her face was as white as the wan plume in her hair.

Leaning cautiously over the railing, half knowing by some strange intuition whom she would see below, she dared indulge in vain hopes.

A lizard ran down a column, and she drew back. How beautiful the night was with its garlands of stars! The sleeping jasmine flowers touched her cheeks. The wind-babies sighed. Every Amboy candle was snuffed and the town was deep in slumber. At the Long Ferry tavern there gleamed one solitary road lantern to greet the Philadelphia mail-coach due in an hour.

She shuddered, mastering herself, and with a final effort bent over the jasmine boughs.

A cry of fright came up from below, making her jump back tremblingly.

Castle To-Morrow

"Jem!" she whispered. "He's come home."
There was a sob in her voice. "It's Castle Nowhere now—only Castle Nowhere."

"Sh—" said Jeminy, half dragging her limp form into the powdering-closet.



VI

The Prologue of a Comedy

AFTER Jeminy had helped Rose to the settle she hurried about the room gathering up the gowns. A square of old stage curtain was draped over the trunk and portions of unfinished work thrown under chairs and tables. "Child," she called, "we can get him away."

The girl's eyes fluttered and she gasped. The knocking below was still kept up at intervals.

"I must go down and let him in," continued Jeminy. "Think of what to say. Show your talent now, darling. Oh, Saint Patrick, what a game of pitch and toss!"

Rose pulled the decorations from her hair and threw them in a vase. Then she shut her eyes for a moment, her little hands straying to her heart as if imploring it to hush its wild beating. The room would have been almost black but for the faint glow of the stars. Below in the

The Prologue of a Comedy

hall an old Dutch wall-clock, left behind by the Terrills, ticked feebly.

"Hello, Jemima Diddle, you watch-dog!" said a voice. "I thought 'twas a spectre. How like she grows to her mother! It seemed Sal's face when she did the 'Knight of Quadalquiver.'"

"Poor little Sallie, she never could abide that part," Jemima was soliloquizing aloud.

"I feel the fright yet," muttered the man. "No stage talk before her," he cautioned. "Hush," he said, opening the door.

The guardian of his child for so many years was gazing at him eagerly. If he but knew all! She had done her best to keep the girl's thoughts from the forbidden territory, but some hidden force had often intervened and shown her the gypsy-road—the happy, care-free road where the singing is loud and stifles the ceaseless beating of the rain-drops and the murmurs of the wind.

Rose was holding a candle which she had just lighted.

"What kept you away so long, father?" she asked, kissing him.

"Cabbages!" he gasped, sinking into a chair.

"Fiddlesticks!" mocked Jeminy from across the room. She longed to defy him—to arouse his anger.

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"Silence, woman," he called. "For a fortnight I lay at the Indian Queen waiting for old Girard to come back from New Orleans. You've heard of him, both of you. The pride of the Quaker City."

"The richest man in all Pennsylvania," cried Rose.

"He will never pass such a sure scheme for doubling money, thinks I. Why, these Amboy waste-lands would make the finest market-garden in the world. Well, yesterday I went to his house a seventh time"—kicking a chair a trifle viciously. "'Is Mr. Stephen Girard at home?' I ask. 'Yes, sir,' and 'step in, sir,' says the negro wench, just as if she expected me. I follow down a long, dark passage, stumbling half the way until she opens a door. Then such a gale of song—enough to deafen one! All over the walls and strung before the windows hung cages of little birds chirruping away as if their lives depended upon it, and in the centre of the room, on a broken chair, sat the old codger himself."

"And did he?" asked the listeners, in a breath.

"No; he scouted the idea—wouldn't touch it." The naturally unctuous voice was full of bitterness. "When I told him we could grow a

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thousand German greens for every dollar, he scratched his dirty pigtail and said, laconically, 'Why don't you grow canaries?'"

"The jackanapes," said Jeminy, moved by a sudden impulse of pity. In the furrowed face before her she saw traces of that youthful lover who used to shower bouquets of Contoit rose-buds at "the Darling of the Park." The bridge of years was very long, but for her dear sake she could look back over its lost vista.

"Things will take a turn, Rob," she whispered, softly. "There's more fish in the sea."

A smile lit his face.

"There's some left," he said, stalking over to a window. "Even if they don't bite at cabbages."

"You must find them, father."

Rose started forward across the room. There was a tone of pleading in her eager, vibrant voice.

"Jepson Barker holds one of your notes long overdue. To-day he came here and threatened to have you put in the common jail if you could not pay. He's a brute and a Barker. The combination works well in Amboy. Oh, father, don't let him drag you off to that terrible damp place where the rats are ten times worse than they are here—almost as thick as ants. Take

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the midnight mail back to Philadelphia. Think of the disgrace—the awful disgrace.”

It was a crucial moment. Jeminy checked the words on her tongue and stepped over into the shadow.

Robert Whitebush bent his head, resting it on his hands. His face showed the working of two conflicting emotions. “I hoped, girl, you had him in leading-strings,” he said, eagerly. Then the head sank lower. “The debtor’s prison,” he muttered. “What would they say in Courtlandt Street? He’ll charge that I obtained the money under false pretences—that I defrauded him. And ’twas he who pressed it on me.”

“He’d house us all there,” the girl cried. She was stretching out her arms imploring him to go, and yet underneath the mask she had assumed for his benefit there were glimmerings of a strong elemental emotion. After all, he was her father. She was doing wrong to send him off, but if he stayed the alternative might be more than she could face.

“‘The Lady’s Last Stake,’” thought Jeminy. Even in a crisis like this the ghosts of the mimic world came back to her. “Will she win?” she wondered.

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"Midnight and all's well," a watchman's voice droned in some far-off alley.

"I've just time to catch it," he whispered, hoarsely. "Dick Posset drives, and he's kin to the breeze. All roads are downhill turnpikes to him. I must be off or the swaggering old rake will have past us." He arose, yawning, took a prolonged, sleepy survey of the room, and then his eyes fastened upon his daughter.

Her heart gave one exulting bound and grew cool again under a wave of pity.

"I'll go with you and Jeminy," she said, aloud. "We'll see you on it safely."

As he picked up his travelling cape and hat, the look of inquiry or suspicion which had overspread his countenance died away, and in its place came one of sorrow. "The family fortune-pot," he muttered, stalking over to the chimney-piece and nearly upsetting a petticoated chair covering some of the gowns. "Hasn't it run dry?"

"We have enough," she answered, blushing at her duplicity. In the bag swinging by her side was the little purse containing the five gold pieces—keys to paradise.

"Father," she faltered, as she nestled closer to him, thinking of his lonely ride; and in the

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word were a dozen meanings, but most of all a cry against fate.

A faint note of a horn echoed over the hills. They were parting perhaps forever. He would never forgive her flight on the morrow. As Jeminy lifted her lantern above the cool, dark grass she could see that he walked in a spent and weary fashion. For a moment she felt that she must make him turn back—she wanted to tell him all. Then the dark face of Jepson Barker rose before her and swiftly died again. Beyond was Courtlandt Street, the gate of the Park—the dear old Park, which seemed to be awaiting her.

His voice entered the river of her thoughts. "I've never done much for you, child," he said, sadly, "but this time I may succeed. When I return again you shall have the finest cashmere shawl the Quakers will let into their city."

"A muslin slip first," added Jeminy.

"Oh, ma'am," he said, turning at the interruption, "your tongue's long."

"Long of tongue and broad of heart, Robert Whitebush. 'Tis the combination that has kept me with you and yours. Ah, man, I hope you may succeed and pluck old Girard and all his birds—and," she added under her breath, "I hope we may succeed."

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There was silence for a minute, and then a low but distinct rumble could be heard.

The three stood very still and listened. "'Tis the coach," said Rose. "Look! the tavern door is opening. We must run."

Across the town green they hurried through waves of flickering moonlight. A watchman asleep by a market-stall awoke as they passed. He hailed them with a voice rusty from yawning, but they paid no heed. Before them in the maze of eddying leaves the mail was lumbering to a stand-still.

"Wo-ho, Ambo'!" shouted the coachman, and the guard blew his key-bugle. The branches parted now, and beyond was the golden light of the side-lamps. They were skidding the wheel for the descent, and the last passenger was only just in time.

"Good-bye," he waved.

"Good-bye," they answered, seizing each other's hands.

They watched the tremulous thing take the hill, the curve, and then vanish. "Saved!" whispered Rose, her eyes half wet. "Saved, and God bless him!"

"Only two mugs of flip," said the landlord, turning and gazing at the female figures by his

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side with prolonged surprise. "May they thirst in their dreams—never have I seen such a dead 'un. Ist! getting a body out of bed for a couple of sips of flip. Hello, missus! What's that? There's horses pacing it. My blood and blazers! Can the mail be turning back?"

"The mail!" echoed his listeners.

Jeminy leaned against the tap-room door and put her arms about Rose. The girl stood there for a moment, then gently broke away and ran to the very edge of the door-yard. Through the plane-trees she could see a dark vehicle and the indistinct forms of horses. Loud whinnying and the mashing of earth smote her ears.

"Only a curricie," said the landlord, craning his neck. "As like as not it won't stop."

"Oh!" faltered the girl, with a sigh of relief.

She suddenly felt very tired. Standing there rubbing her eyes, and listening to the watchman they had disturbed on the green call "All's well," in imagination she was following a mail-coach swirling through the mist of night—of many nights to come and of long, long years.

"Hello, you!" called the host, and she turned.

A youth was leaning out of a window, and she met his admiring gaze. For a moment she returned it, fascinated.

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The moonlight beat on his hair, changing it into gold, and his eyes were the eyes of her own dream-lover.

"Am I awake?" she asked herself. He was different from any man she had ever seen in Amboy. And then, becoming aware of the late hour and the fact that she was alone, she ran behind an overgrown clump of box.

"Is this road straight to York?" she heard him call.

He was bound for York, too. A feeling of gladness thrilled her. We may meet in Castle To-Morrow, she thought. Perhaps, who knows— But when Jeminy joined her and she came out from her hiding-place expecting to find his vehicle, only a lonely road greeted her eager eyes.

VII

Lady Franklin Takes the Road

THE King's Barracks, abutting the King's Highway, was a ramshackle old building. It was very long and narrow, with two great side wings built of canary brick. Governor Francis Bernard, the fastidious Latin-talking gentleman who won the baronetcy of Nettleham by his glib tongue, had watched its erection from a window of Government House—counting the bricks, it was said, lest the builders should defraud his gracious majesty. That was in the year 1759, when the race-course was the talk of Pearl Street, and York gentlemen, accompanied by the gay dicing crew at the Duke's Farm, journeyed to Sandys Point. Barbadoes Bet, the fleetest mare in the colonies, was running then, and so wide-spread was her fame that across the seas a prince of the royal blood vowed he would give a jewel from his father's crown to view her.

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The Amboy lovers of good sport who journeyed to the course were in the habit of stopping for a look at the rising pile. It gave them a pleasant feeling of security and pride too—if the bucks from Dutchtown were nigh. Although York had grown far beyond her Jersey sister, there was still a feeling of rivalry fostered by both cities. Oft-times, between races, those who had neither gains nor losses to count turned their heads towards the high white fence surrounding the smooth esplanade and wondered if it were finer than the fence about the new fort across the waters. Many who had watched it gleaming proudly in the sunlight when the first troops came to it fresh from the capture of Havana had seen it surrender to Captain Conway's men at the beginning of the Revolution. Such are the fortunes of war.

To-day but few of the palings remained, and the central portion of the building had been torn away. Over the drilling-grounds which had felt the foot-falls of numberless regiments—red-coated grenadiers, Highlanders with flowing kilts and naked knees, Delaware and Brunswick recruits garbed in homespun, and the sombre slaves of Anspach—an army of green things were spreading like a weedy mockery. Walls that had once listened to the roll of drums, the roar

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of musketry, and all the pomp of preparation for battle, now heard only the sounds of summer insects. The rooms that could shelter half a thousand men were given over to one—Adoniram Heard, the town's all-job man. Adoniram could do almost anything required of him. When a packet of wall-papers arrived from France for some wealthy inhabitant, he it was who pasted and hung them. Chair-mending was another of his specialties, and many a bit of broken oak from the old country had been righted by his deft fingers. There was one room in the barracks filled with odd junk picked up at vendues. It was a jest among housewives that Heard would buy anything that everybody else shunned. The worn-out furniture sent by the Earl of Perth's brother, Viscount Melford, to his kinsman, Dougal Ashe, found its way to Heard's; so did the old court-house lantern, and a bundle of Dame Webble's gourd-shell dishes. Sometimes he played at coopering, and turned out piggins and noggins, firkins and buckets by the score. Again he was a horse-doctor, and such was his love of horse-flesh, it is said, that any whinnying with a note of suffering in it was able to move his compassion and keep him away from a better-paying occupation.

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It was by his door, blissfully intent upon a corn-cob, that Rose found him. A friendly wild moonberry-vine, still spangled with dew-drops, sheltered him from the sun and kept the air in those dark passages at his back ineffably cool and moist.

She gazed for an instant at the short, rubicund figure almost molelike in its relaxation, then, gaining courage, called from the sunlit meadow:

"Oh, la, la, Mr. Heard!"

He turned and rubbed his eyes, taking the pipe from his mouth.

"No squawking there, baggage; the missus sleeps yonder," he mumbled. Then he recognized Rose and chuckled apologetically.

"Is it a leak in the roof again?" he asked, rising slowly.

"No; more than that," she answered.

"Do you want a loom set up?"

"Oh, 'tis greater still."

"What—rats?"

"There's only a little band left now, Mr. Heard." She was dimpling deliciously at each word as if intent on charming him. "Yes, finer folk would be away—Jeminy, sir—and me."

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"Clock-reel, I cannot follow you—would be away," he repeated, querulously.

"You're to lead us, sir—to drive us. Oh, sir, we must start for York to-day, and there's no one else to ask but you—always so good and kind. Jeminy said, 'There's Adoniram Heard who will help us. He's a man one can depend on.' Oh, I'm worse than the turning clock-reel you call me. I'm a woman hard pressed." Her last sentence ended with a little cry that was half a sob.

"To York!" he said.

"You have a coach yonder, and we have money."

There was a momentary silence, then the old man ambled to his feet and slowly rubbed his forelock with his knotted hands, as if pondering.

"I went a-gallivanting oncet," he leered. As he turned he beckoned Rose to follow him.

Before them was the wide valley which led to the western door and the stables. The devil's stick, it was called, from the flogging of British heroes which once went on there. The rush of cool air made the tears come to the girl's eyes, suffering from the strain of the previous night. Perhaps Mr. Heard saw them, for as he turned

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he spoke very softly with all the gruffness gone from his voice.

"You have a way with a body just like Miss Jemima, ma'am. Keep the cozening up. There's maids a-plenty along High Street it would ha' helped and saved from turning into brier bushes. We all likes it—old fellows and youngish sparks. Females that talks roses and lilies and laylocks is more welcome than them that spits weeds. It's only natural."

They had reached the stable door when he grasped her arm excitedly. "Take a look, ma'am—'tis far finer than Lady Murray's, the first that came to York—'tis finer than any in Amboy—'tis finer than the French Buonapartey's. 'Twas a great lady's. My Lady Franklin's," he said, enjoying his climax.

There, under the eaves, stood the antiquated vehicle covered with leaves and dust from the road-side. Many a score of years had rolled away since my lady had tripped down those side steps followed by Susan and the scolding French poodle. The bright poker of a coachman, belaced and wearing a magnificent posey in his button-hole, who once held the box while the country-side gaped, would have wept tears of indignation at finding a Muscovy roosting on the

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sacred spot his glittering coat-tails once touched. A dozen covers, gilders, mercers, and chasers had given it the best labor of their hearts and brains all for one woman to ride in a score or two of times. Shortly after Sir William petitioned the assembly for better roads throughout the province the shandrydan was brought from the mother-country as a present to his Elizabeth. But, strange to say, the first lady of the Jerseys never took kindly to her state-coach. 'Twas whispered at the time that on the first occasion of its use a wheel stuck fast in a rut, and my lady was forced to walk from Woodbridge into Amboy without a pinch of musty or a comfit to cheer her. Having no resource but her nerves, she scared the little, unarmed postilion who accompanied her by vowing every few rods they footed she was like to die or a brigand was looking out at them from behind the bushes.

At the palace there was a worse scene. Sir William had departed for Philadelphia. Grave business of state, his farewell billet said, and yet my lady feared. What did she fear? Tradition says the governor's eyes were wont to roam, and his feet are known to have strayed from the narrow path. What was my lady thinking of as she tore her hair in the great, dim parlor? Pangs

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of jealousy shot through her breast, and she began to hate her new coach. An hour too late to prevent the bird from flying! No wonder she loathed the seeming cause of her misery and protested that its cinnamon lining made her look sallow!

"'Tis an ugly beast of a thing," she used to delight in telling her better half after that date. "Give me a sedan or a brouette with a couple of sturdy chairmen. Five hundred pounds sunk in that flying-wagon—snail-wagon would have been better. Too bad, sir, you hadn't kept the money for a trip to Philadelphia!"

Rose looked at the old fellow as he gazed long and earnestly at the ramshackle affair as if following it back over the King's Highway to that distant day when, dapper and primly wigged, he leaped to the foot-board and swung along behind the quality. Then there were pretty wenches at the Silk Bag and the George, to peep out as he rode by, and hardier filled baggages to huzza. 'Twas not my lady they stared at, nor the gilded side-panelling old Mr. Franklin thought so prodigious fine, but the comely lad in scarlet who ogled them and threw them kisses as he jolted off to Parsippany.

Turning, he smiled and showed his snuff-

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colored gums. "I've had her twoscore years now. Dave Ricketts he swap her for a Dunham gelding. 'Old junk,' says he. 'I got her on Tory moving-day in 1781, and I've kept her a-hoping coaches is coming into mode again.' 'Hope on,' says I. 'Hope a crown's worth a day till the king gets on the court-house again, but you'll die a-hoping. Them that's born to coaches walks now. I'll give you the horse for her, as I've a fancy for the old dame.' 'She's a tony, high, expensive piece of gimcrack coach-making,' says he. 'Lud,' I answered, 'haven't I ridden on her often enough?'

"Dave was took down some pegs after that, and the horse being a fine piece of flesh he parted with her. 'Twas a queerish notion on my part, but I just hankered to have that old critter here when I knowed her so well in the old times 'fore gentlemen gave up being real gentlemen and got shook up in the potato-sack of this world, where the common trash is doing most of the sprouting nowadays."

He went nearer to the coach, stood on tiptoe, and opened the door.

"Proud old critter," he said. "I flicker we were alike oncet." With a gentle motion he rubbed his wrinkled hand over the cushioned

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seat. "Ah, miss, afore my lady left you should have seen Ambo' Point. Those in the governor's service lived on merry pins. Always a flagon of ale or Monmouth cider for the asking, and sometimes after company a sip of old Canary.

"Do 'ee like the brocady, miss?" he asked, irrelevantly, while a pleased look overspread his wizened face as if he knew the answer.

"Beautiful," said the girl.

She gazed at the finely flowered stuff, then out into the yards where the fowls were keeping up a constant clucking. Would he never agree to take her? The sun was growing hotter, and unless they soon made a start it would mean a night at some road-house. She fingered the gold pieces again, hoping that it would attract his attention.

"So ee'd ride to York in my lady's coach behind a punch-nag? I've half a mind to it. Martha's got the rheumatics and cannot thwart us. My lady lies at York. They do say she is buried in St. Paul's, and I've half a mind to visit her. Lud, miss, I'm not the mettled fellow that I was, and my lady was that kind to me then. She saved me many a knouting from Sir William. When the cook told him I had tasted a new ale on a Michaelmas, and he was about to

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turn me off, up speaks my lady and calls me a fellow of parts. 'Leave the lad be,' says she, aside. 'He's only sipped of the folly his betters gulp.'"

"Is it yes, Mr. Heard?" asked Rose, wondering what Jeminy would think of her delay. But the keeper of the dismantled King's Barracks did not hear her. He was leaning against the coach-wheel cogitating, half aloud:

"Think of me going to see my lady. She that's been waylorn so long. After they'd carried the master off to prison there's bodies said she up and smashes half the gewgaws in Government House, but I never ha' believed it of her. No, ma'am, she don't ride off in this old critter, but in Master Stirling's chaise. Lud, making my lady ride in a common man's chaise! 'God keep 'ee, Adoniram,' says she, by the great road-gate, for I had stayed on after the other servants. 'Evil days part us, lad,' says she. 'You've been honest at your duties, an' all I could ha' asked for.' Then she touches my hand with her little white fingers, and before all the Whigs she up and cries, 'And be true to your king lest you swing with the scullions!' With that some one in the crowd hurls a pebble at her, but my lady pays no heed and sits up the straighter,

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as if her back was ramrodded. By the stile she takes off her cloak and wraps it about her, and a hush falls over all at her impudence—for my lady's cloak was made from the king's flag that had always flown over Government House. It seemed to mock at those men and women as my lady rode down High Street, and they would have thrown more stones at her but for old Squire Balleygren, a double rebel. 'Uncover, free-men,' he roared, 'tis a woman of courage! A cheer for Ben's daughter!' And way down the road the red coat gullied and gullied at the townspeople until my lady was out of sight forever."

Rose remained silent and watched the old fellow mop his forehead. The sunlight throbbed about her, for she knew fate hung on his next words.

"Think of me agoing to see my lady!" he reiterated again, and, turning suddenly, he asked, in a sheepish fashion, "Be there love in it?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Heard," she answered, trying to cajole him. "There's a round dozen of pretty fellows waiting for me somewhere; but, sir, pray keep it a secret!"

He wagged his head and began mopping faster.

"Ah, you will take us, and soon, for see how hot the meadows look, and the day is growing!"

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"Martha's bedridden, an' I've a liking for it. I'll do it, miss. I'll be at Terrills' in an hour or more. No"—waving back the proffered gold pieces—"these stiff bones need shaking. I've long been looking for a holiday, and now that Martha's down—Happen you think me fool-begged, but there's mead aplenty at York, the like I never get. They do say the place has grown a bit, too; and then, miss, I've a fancy to visit my lady, always that good to me."

Rose, who seemed possessed of a desire to dance now that the day was won, bade him farewell, and with parting injunctions about keeping the affair a secret, she ran across the road and took the short cut through the meadows home.

Later, when the heart of the ancient Terrill sundial was glowing, and the refined circles of Amboy dozed over their noon-day meal, the Lady Franklin rolled sedately out of the Barracks and took the road without one protesting creak of age.

"A dapper crone she is," thought Mr. Adoniram Heard. That worthy, seated on the box and holding the reins over his nags like a youngster, was a fearful and wonderful object to behold. He wore an aged, mildewed coat of

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the plum-colored Franklin livery which in certain spots had changed to pink. The garment was a tight fit, for fifty years had slightly increased Mr. Heard's proportions. His head held a rakish cocked hat topped by a jaunty feather that might have become a Vauxhall dandy when North River gardens were in their heyday, but looked rather like a monkey-cap above Mr. Heard's weather-beaten face. Pantaloon of sinchew and a flowered vest were his other most notable habiliments. But Adoniram saw nothing incongruous about his costume, and was as happy as a monarch come back to his kingdom after a long imprisonment.

There was one sigh, when he first started for the wig that lay in the chest in Martha's room. Poor old fellow, he lacked the courage to beard his scolding wife. "She'd growl at York," he muttered, "though my lady always liked a proper wig. Well, pritch it!" he said, after a moment, resignedly.

The red clay dust flew up from the way-side and he seemed to drink it in. The clouds skipped after him like comrades in pursuit of happiness. Birds in the hedges sang of Sallies and Clorindas that once knew a straight young Adoniram in a red coat. The drowsy strip of road curving

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about the green to Terrills' was like a draught of youth to the man bound to visit the tomb of his old-time mistress.

Rose, when she had climbed the steps to the second hall, was greeted by the huge Terrill trunk, strapped and locked and topped by two saucy-looking little foot-warmers.

Jeminy, rushing out of the passage to greet her, saw the surprise in her face and laughed. "Sure I've heard the English always carry them in summer for fear the weather may turn, and we must do as the English do. In the room there's three flowered hat-boxes for our head-gear, a reticule, a week-day book-bag for *Clarissa* and *Amelia*, and a Sunday one for the prayer-books and the *Martyrs' Lives*. 'Twould never do to have them together. I've a jewel-chest, too, in which I've packed the turkey-feather fans—we'll have to present them as gifts. The more luggage we take the better the impression. I, for my part, mean to impress them. I've been sat on for a good portion of my days, and now I intend doing some of the sitting." And truly the emotional Miss Jemima Diddle, from her rather broad gigots to the Queen Caroline bow on her head, did look an impressive personage as she seated herself on the trunk with a tre-

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mendous thud which argued ill for the softer substances she hoped to come in contact with in the future.

"If Courtlandt Street knew what is in store for it!" laughed Rose. Then she ran off to her room and returned in a short while dressed for the journey. As she stood idly in the hall one could see the fatigue of the night had left its mark upon her face. The eyes were slightly shadowed and the cheeks were a trifle less pink.

Jeminy, in the back of the kitchen, was giving some last directions to Selima, the black girl, and Rose wandered through the half-denuded rooms, now eying some familiar object lovingly — the colored print of Violette, Garrick's wife, hanging over the chimney-piece, the blue bowl on the oak table always kept filled with sweet-williams — and sometimes humming snatches of song. She was so intent on her dream, vivified by the bright atmosphere, that she did not feel any of the pathos of parting from the old house which had sheltered her so many years. Her long-strung expectations were about to be realized. She was going to become a great actress and charm the brilliant world of Gotham! It was all so near at hand she only had to reach out and grasp it. A few more

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hours and she would be at Courtlandt Street, the gate of her first play—her comedy!

The starling began to twitter at her and thrust his glossy beak through the bars of his cage. She answered him merrily, although a look of dismay clouded her features for a moment.

"I'd forgotten you, Washington," she said. "You're such a gay old boy, of course you'd like a peep at town."

"Conk-quer-rée," he called, and the familiar notes sounded this time like: "I want to go! I want to go!"

She caught up her silken gown lightly, jumped to a chair, and took the cage from the hook on which it swung. As he stood there poised in the air, her attention was arrested by an animated colloquy in the hall below.

"Lordy, miss, you be fine!"

"Say Miss Jemima, girl, or, rather, Miss Clarissa Wildairs, my new name. Oh, what a fluster I'm in, bound for York again!"

There was a prolonged giggle from the negress, and Jeminy could be heard rustling across the floor. Then the voice continued, "For sure, Miss Clarissa, yo' steppin' high; but look out yo' feets don't come loose."

"She's wearing Lady Macbeth's old shoes,"

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thought Rose. The faint pitter-patter of footsteps died away and she still listened, the bird-cage swaying in her hand. Over the green a bell note drifted. Almost unisonant came the whir of wheels.

There was no drawing back now. What if her father never forgave them? She could hear the lumbering thing come to a stand-still. An axle groaned. Feathered knights of the road clari-oned their defiance. The trunk was being moved out of the hall. Jeminy was laughing with her queer coachman. Suddenly she shut her eyes to stifle the tears, but the mental picture of the half-denuded room stayed with her. The next thing she knew Selima was sobbing over her hands. Jeminy's voluble injunctions, which filled the air, blew past her like the thistle's down. She was thinking of a battered and empty Park Theatre trunk alone in a dusty attic.

"Are you in?" called Mr. Heard.

Jeminy grasped the doorstep and pulled it tighter by way of answer, and once again the Lady Franklin jolted forward heeling to the right. The additional load acted upon the coach like a lickerish tonic upon a very proper old female, for she began performing various antics and wheezed and chortled away her pent-

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up gayety. She raised such a commotion that many of the genteel inhabitants of High Street left their dishes of tea and vulgarly ran to shutters—always closed at this destructive hour—for a peep. So prevalent was the custom of peeping in Amboy that the shutters before many windows remained partly dormant the whole afternoon, and it was not safe to go abroad between the ringing of the noonday bell and eventide unless in parade attire. A sinister eye was always looking out of the open inch of every window—for the households were large in Amboy, and the mere act of passing a dozen dwelling-fronts was like undergoing an inquisition.

Three little boys playing with hoops shrieked in a high, shrill treble of delight as the coach rolled by. Rose put her head out of the window and took one last look at the white spire of St. Peter's, but she dared not glance back over the green. Tears were in her eyes as she sank down by Jeminy on Elizabeth Franklin's cinnamon cushions.

On they jolted, bumping curtsies to the old houses the coach had known in happier times, while the eyes behind the shutters stared. Amboy, the home of an impoverished gentry glorying in its relics of the past, marvelled at the queer



"SHE WAS THINKING OF A BATTERED AND EMPTY PARK THEATRE TRUNK
ALONE IN A DUSTY ATTIC"

Lady Franklin Takes the Road

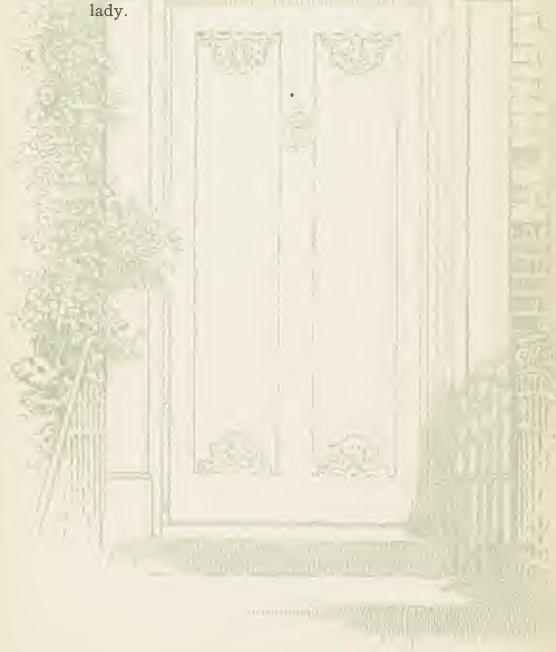
chariot. Was the ghost of the proud Eliza back in broad noonshine. 'Twould be like her, some aged bodies said, for a woman who never followed the common fashion on earth might find it demeaning to join the humdrum concourse of nocturnal shades! Hadn't she always danced a stately turn instead of a rollicking one in the rural figure of the popular Jersey minuet originated by the gay Mr. Townley who wedded Lady Carteret? Wasn't she seen once brazenly carrying a bed pillow to St. Peter's on a sermon Sunday? Her whimsies were ever food for scandal. No wonder one timorous dame dropped a hair from her cat's tail on the hearth after looking at the coach. It was better to be prepared, and the charm would keep her away from the house, at any rate.

Yoho, Amboy! Tom Heard has his horn. Yoho, Jepson Barker! How you would start if you could see into that coach! Yoho, black men, picking weeds in the prim gardens! Yoho, barking dogs and flying geese!

Soon the brick walls, pediments, palings, and hedges merge into broader sweeps of farm-land. The Lady Franklin is leaving the town-road for the York Highway. Off in the distance Castle To-Morrow begins to rise faint and wraithlike,

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but very beautiful. The two inside smile at the sturdy hay-ricks, the chattering streams, and the waving trees. All the joy bells of the day begin lilting in unison, and up on the box the old coachman is crooning softly to himself a quaint little air about a lover who had lost his lady.





VIII

Bob to the Quality

THE old coach which left Amboy, glowing under a canopy of sunshine, jogged on bravely through the long, hot hours and finally reached those aisles of shadows beloved by weary travellers. The yellow and orange flaming fields grew slowly paler and the gossamer lights went out. A veil seemed to envelop the world, dragging off the full-bosomed clouds, enmeshing the odors of English clover-grass, golden-rod, mullein, wild aster, and sweet-fern into one full, rich scent, dimming the dust and painting the vivid greens of rolling, meadow-swept country with a tint cool and velvet-like.

There had been little life on the road that mid-summer day, but the Amboy travellers found the journey exciting enough. A pull through a mire in which the wheels sank almost to their hubs gave both the ladies a fright, and Rose hastily drew down the windows to save their gowns from mud-stains.

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"Open them!" said Jeminy, entreatingly, when they reached level ground again. "We might be overturned, and all the glass would splinter on our pates."

Her fears were not merely a nervous woman's crotchets, for every time she closed her eyes and tried to accustom herself to the motion of the vehicle Adoniram was sure to call out in stentorian tones, "Whiz! both to the right now." After the danger of overturning in the rut was past he would chuckle, "My, isn't she the gay old one!"

"Old jumping-jack," echoed Jeminy, under her breath. "I don't want to be ungrateful, dear, but I should like to preserve my backbone intact. I'll need all that's been given to me soon. Oh, drat these flies! I wish we'd thought of going by boat."

"Beggars cannot be choosers," said Rose, half reproachfully. "Besides, 'twould have been too great a risk."

"Beggars!" screamed Jemima. "I'm Miss Clarissa Wildairs. Will you ever spunk up to your part? Dunny used to say, 'Drink in your lines a week or two before spouting.' When one wants to occupy a certain position in this world he can't begin practising for it too soon."

Bob to the Quality

Acting is the same as every-day life. If I were your age and had my days to live over again, I'd be just what my mind craved—the president's lady, or a second Cleopatra, maybe."

She smoothed the lace of her frill and gave a touch to her bonnet plume as if it were some human thing that could be slapped or poked into standing straighter.

"Are you thinking of that which we left behind or what we are coming to?" she asked, suddenly, her whole manner changing.

"I'm trying not to think," answered the girl. "I want to drift just like those white clouds off there and the birds circling away in the distance. To-night will take care of itself."

When the Lady Franklin neared the Elm-Tree tavern in Woodbridge, at whose trough thirsty beasts always paused for a drink, a consultation was held about holding up cloaks to the windows.

"Don't tarry here long, Mr. Heard," Jeminy called to her driver. "Dame Trusset is a briskish gossip, and if she caught sight of us it might be our undoing."

"Not even a sip of summer punch," he bawled, cheerily. "'Tis a fine ordinary, though—with the biggest sign in Jersey. They say 'twas

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painted by one Quaker limner West, who later went to court and daubed a mile of canvas for the king. No tipling and brawling here! I knew it well as a younker long before those thin, slippery-voiced Trussets took it."

Once in the yard facing the brick-nogged, snugly weather-boarded building, a woman put her head out of an upper window and piped, "What fare, folks?"

"None, mistress," answered Adoniram. Then in an undertone, "There's quality inside that's teetotalers."

"The man would do for Drury," whispered Jeminy, crouching against the back cushions. "What's in his noddle now?"

"I do believe it's Adoniram Heard," said the voice above. "We've been a-resting. The mail's not due for a good two hours yet. Say, you, we've a four-poster that needs mending—a mimbo-bowl cracked in two!" She would have continued if he had not interrupted her.

"My pocket needs mending—there's an eagle and nigh three shillings your goodman owes me," laughed Mr. Heard, laconically.

"I thought he paid you."

"Thought would make us all go begging. Times is changed since Monmouth men kept

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cheer behind that elm. You from Connecticut are not like our hosts." The old man was leering and nodding his head.

"You'd insult us, would you, popinjay?" railed the angry dame. "Your coach needs a bunch of feathers on top, I'm thinking. Looks as if't came from the Ark."

"Drive on, man," called Jeminy, haughtily, from within.

The clumsy-barrelled nags snorted and dropped the water from their jowls. As they cleared the yard Mr. Heard, whose temper had become peppery, leaned back and asked, smartly:

"What did you say, *Miss Diddle*?"

"I said to drive on, *Mister Heard*."

Adoniram had not been farther than Woodbridge for many years, and twice he ran the Lady Franklin into cross-roads—wretched places with alternating stumps and holes. These excursions always made him loudly bewail his loss of common-sense. "I might have knowed this swamp-patch would ha' befooled us." One time a man in a chaise set him right, and again an ugly, corduroyed swamp warned him to turn back.

A fresh west wind began to blow as they neared Elizabeth town. Like a parting curtain the woodland delved away, and over a green maze

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a hundred stately roofs and spires glistened against segments of molten gold. Beyond were the blossoming lines of night. It was a peaceful scene—the old town creeping shyly to the very banks of the deep-flowing river. There the good ship *Philip*, bearing that sprightly youth Philip Carteret, had come to anchor one midsummer day and changed the fortunes of the little settlement. It was at his desire, tradition says, that the place was named after Lady Elizabeth Carteret—the lovely consort of Sir George Carteret, immortalized in gossipy Samuel Pepys's diary as an angel of goodness, "because she did cry out against the vices of the merry monarch's court."

"Ah," sighed the girl, leaning out of a window.

"It hasn't grown much," said Jeminy—"same streets, same houses, same boulder in that field. We came here in 'Cassandra,' before you were thought of, lady-bird."

"Did mother do 'Cassandra' for these people?"

"They went wild over it. Oh, Heavens, that night! The taverns were so full we lodged with a French family. Where's the house? Let me look!"

A noise up the road made them bend forward.

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"Welcome! Welcome—marquis! Welcome!" a crowd of begrimed, nankeen-clad gamins were shouting about them.

"It must be the coach," said Jeminy, breathlessly; "they think we are great people."

She gave her dress another admiring touch as a boy more persistent than the others ran by the coach and bobbed.

The Lady Franklin was turning into the French quarter of the town. Jemima put her head out of a window and scrutinized each dwelling. She peered to the right and to the left, until her eyes rested upon the bent figure of a tiny old man by the door of a shingled house. "'Tis Desoy! He knew your mother, Rose. I wonder if his girl is with him."

"Oh, please stop, Mr. Heard!" called Rose.

As the vehicle came to a stand-still a thin, cackling laugh met their ears. "Madame, ze chilluns take you for zat Lafayette. He's coming soon. Oh, mes enfants, too fast, too fast."

"Don't you remember me, Mr. Desoy?" asked Jeminy—her air was almost tragic.

The old fellow fluttered back a few paces. Into his grin there came an expression of remorse. "I should," he said, smoothing his sparse locks.

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Then, wringing his hands, "I meet so many ladies, but—wait—"

"Have you forgotten Cassandra?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! She who came wid zat Sallie Lowe. I nevaire forget zat Sallie Lowe! Does she still smile like ze rose?" placing a withered hand on his heart.

"Somewhere," said the other voice, now choked with tears.

"Does she still skip like ze birds—ze little finch?"

"Oh, man, I hope she hears! I hope she hears!"

"Pardonnez!" he ejaculated, reading her eyes. "I am a villain!" Then blinking at Rose, "Mademoiselle," he said, "zat Sallie Lowe, your muzzer, were a great lady. May you be like to her. She once did sleep here. My Julie was to home. Oh, my Julie, she has gone—she is in York city, madame. May you patron her. She would go and leave me."

"We're bound for there."

Mr. Heard twisted about on the box impatiently.

"Dusk's falling, ma'am," he said, wrapping a robe about his feet.

M. Desoy moved nearer the coach.

Bob to the Quality

"Would that I go, too. Ah, Lafayette, the chile who went awrong. I love him yet, mon hero. At Versailles I meet him first. So young—so strong—such fire! Like cavalier for her." He smiled at Rose.

"Gee-long," clucked the coachman.

"See it! Look it!" screamed the now half-dancing bit of humanity. "The flags all out to him. All joyful, but Madame de Marcinelle. She spit at him; say she, 'She luv her Louis.'"

His voice was lost in the commotion the vehicle made.

"Chattering frog-eater," mumbled Mr. Heard, scornfully.

"Poor old man!" said Jeminy.

Rose did not hear either of them. She was thinking of M. Desoy's description of Lafayette. "So young—so strong—such fire!" She saw the form of a youth leaning out of a coach-window in the moonlight.

IX

As the Spire of St. Paul's Faded

"**T**HE *Mouse of the Mountain* am sailing,"
a negro's voice droned.

Mr. Heard's coach stood in the yard of Lyons's Hotel at Paulus Hook as the tooting of the ferry-boat proclaimed its readiness to depart. The old man had dismounted and was speaking to his passengers, who were leaning abjectly against the side steps, heedless of soil and stains. "We're too late for this one; there's another crossing," he said. "The black says they run every half-hour by the clock yonder, from sunrise to moonrise."

It was now quite dark. Across the smooth river gleamed the multitudinous lights of York. A bell began clanging furiously, and down the slope where the ferry-boats were docked black figures ran to and fro, gesticulating. The door of the hotel opened and a wide orange splash of light swept diagonally over the lawn almost reaching the gently flowing water.

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"Hurry, sir! Hurry!" a boy's voice called. A man-servant with a bag ran down the gravel-path, and after him at a leisurely pace followed a gentleman in a duster. At the moment he reached the spot near the coach-wheel where he had to turn, Adoniram succeeded in lighting the Lady Franklin's night-lamp.

Rose looked, then lowered her eyelids. The youth of the night before had gazed at her for a second as if startled, smiled, and was gone.

"Oh!" she said, lapsing into silence almost as suddenly—afraid of her betraying voice.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Jeminy; "keeping a boat waiting like that. We might have caught it, too," she said, complainingly, to Heard.

"Might," he snapped, as he ambled off to the tap-room. "Might! It sounds like Martha."

"Let us walk," whispered the girl, glad that her companion had not recognized the belated youth although she could not have explained the reason. A strange feeling akin to happiness was rising in her heart. It was the fire of youth—joyous youth, the wonder-thing which knows a million leagues of care-free roads; so many dreams of choiring birds, lovelit vales, and divine to-morrows. One little smile can call it into flame. A half-spoken word suffices to

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awake all its realms of yearning and expectation. The Whitebushes awaited her on the other side of that black pool, but for the moment all fear of them was gone. A pair of merry blue eyes looked into hers again. What were they doing in reality? Watching St. Paul's spire fade into the encircling night, or gazing at the receding space—and her? She wondered as she put her arm through Jeminy's and crept down the weedy path to one of the rustic pleasure-houses overhanging the water.

"You're brave, darling?" asked Jeminy, taking her hands.

"I'm still drifting, Jem—"

"It's a good thing to be able to drift, child. Yes, we're all like them," she continued, waving her hand at the lines of stately merchantmen riding at anchor in the lower bay. "We're all like them, but some of us never get to port."

There was silence for a moment, and then she said, irrelevantly, "Do you think your aunts will be very terrible?"

"Gorgons, mostlike."

"This river-air is chillsome," muttered the other, drawing her coat about her. Then, with a tremor, "Do you think you'll be able to carry it through?"

As the Spire of St. Paul's Faded

"I'll not break down the first night," laughed Rose.

Jeminy looked back at the lighted hostelry. "I wish—I wish we had stayed in Amboy. Your father may sell the—may sell the cabbages."

"Oh, Clarissa," said the girl, making one of her dainty mocking curtsies. "You were the brave one a few hours go. Where has all your courage flown? Those two terrible old women and the snuff-eating ogre, their brother, give me no qualms now. Why, Jem, beyond that steeple which the boat is nearing stands the old Park—our Park. I'm sure I see its roof. Am I not right?" She bent forward and clapped her hands gayly.

"Sure, darling, it is the place." Her voice was thick with tears, and she ended her sentence suddenly.

Rose turned her face to the water-line again.

"When I look there, somehow I feel mother's protecting presence. 'Little gypsy child of mine, I forgive you for what you are going to do. I know. I understand—everything.' She says that to me. Oh, Jeminy, this blue night is a stage-curtain and the stars are my candles. I long for the play to begin."

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The tide came rushing in below them, beating fretfully against the bulwarks and sobbing away its life against the stout sides of the Edge wind-mill. A song from some negroes in a periauger rose on the fragrant wind. Lights began to leave the twinkling shore-line opposite and dash off oceanward into the dim, witchlike haze. The harbor was preparing for the long hours of inactivity. Sails were slowly fluttering down like clouds weary of the heavens, and the army of masts guarding the harbor seemed held together by cobweb threads.

She was about to speak again when her eyes caught sight of a figure mounting the ferry steps. "Why, he missed the boat, after all!" she exclaimed. "What a lark! And the valet's gone with his bags."

The tall youth evidently heard her, for his lips curved though he kept his eyes on the tavern beyond.

Rose saw and blushed. A Caroline would never have spoken so loud, she reflected.

"He has a grand air," said Jeminy, "and almost a stage strut."

They watched him cross the dusty court-yard, his coat brushing the geraniums which shivered behind the palings.

As the Spire of St. Paul's Faded

The door opened and blew to, slowly. For a minute the night was oppressively still, then George Washington called shrilly from the coach as if disturbed, and on his cries a medley of voices broke forth.

"Yes, Mr. Lyons, I know we cannot pay, but you must not hold our things. We open at the garden to-morrow. Do give back Fido's Judy, good sir?" A wheezing female voice ended in a wail.

On the doorsteps swayed a group of a dozen men and one old dame, at whose heels a little dog barked furiously, darting in and out from under her skirts to make onslaught at the calves of the surrounding crowd. Most of the men were commercial travellers, hearty knights of the road, ever ready for a frolic, and they entered into the jest of the thing, laughing boisterously at the landlord, who held above his head a puppet-doll.

As Mr. Heard left the tap-room, ambling to his nags a trifle unsteadily, Rose made for him, followed by Jemima.

"Oh, what is it?" she asked.

"The puppet-man canna pay his debts. 'Tis his grandam yonder."

"Let my Fritzzy off, sir, and give us back our

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duds, and Arabella Durant will ever thank you. Stop, Fido! Bad devil!" The bedizened crone touched her heart with three fingers melodramatically, and her wrinkles stretched into a grin which was meant to be seductive as she peered wistfully into the flushed faces of the curveting line.

"'Twas a bad night," spoke a dark youth, who stood a trifle away and eyed the proceedings sullenly. "But fifty cents for all Paulus Hook. Bull-baiting and cock-fights come nearer to your drama. A fine place. Let him keep our properties, gran. They'll relish the tale at Scudder's."

"Have done your jabber, Mr. Beelzebub," shrieked the enraged landlord, who now felt that he had been making a fool of himself.

The boy strode away and the old creature sat down on the steps and moaned, but the merriment did not abate.

"Lor'," said Mr. Heard, "I've half a mind—"

A whistle tooted and the other door of the hostelry opened. The distinguished traveller came out again, evidently intending to be in readiness for the ferry-boat. He glanced at the scene, puzzled at first, then as its meaning dawned upon him a light of indignation crept into his eyes.

As the Spire of St. Paul's Faded

Rose did not see him this time. She was trembling with sympathy for the poor puppet-players.

"That's what some of us come to," said Jeminy.

The girl did not hear her, but started forward to the crowd.

"For shame!" she cried. "'Tis a woman you're making sport of—not a sawdust doll. Even the dog has more feeling than some of you."

The laughter ceased. A medley of voices fell away into hoarse chuckles and sudden gasps. She looked so very frail and appealing in the bright light streaming out of the open door. The wind was catching her dark travelling-coat and showing the yellow taffeta beneath. Mr. Heard had gallantly strode after her, followed by Jeminy, and his quaint attire looked more unusual when contrasted with the circle of moderns.

"Master Punch himself," a buck called, slapping his thigh. The landlord turned, lowering the battered old puppet. For some minutes, before beginning to speak, he hung his head sheepishly. He knew the girl had arrived in the chariot but had not patronized his fare. Perhaps she was some great Jersey lady too fine for an ordinary. Old Madam Rutherford would never enter his welcoming door. "It is half a

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frolic, ma'am," he said. "They had no business to put up at a house like Lyons's Hotel. We're only for the quality!" This last remark was delivered with gusto and a waving of the arms that was meant to be impressive.

"And them what's got money," some wag broke in.

"General Lafayette and his son, George Washington Lafayette, will stop here when the *Cadmus* reaches dock," he retorted, indignantly.

The old woman was on her feet. "Good sir, we'll pay in a night or two if you will give us our things. Oh, please, sir," she pleaded; "and Chatham Street will bless you!"

"Here's your foolery," he said, throwing her the doll. "My young lordling yonder may take his boxes and be off. The town pants for *him*! You, madam, can stay here until the bill is paid. I know actor folk," shaking a finger. "You, ma'am, can stay behind with me—in pawn."

A burst of merriment filled the air. So loud and prolonged it was that the wenches in the kitchen began to raise windows for a peep at the fracas.

All the while the man on the front porch gazed at the scene, catching a word or two now and

As the Spire of St. Paul's Faded

then, but mostly intent upon the movements of the graceful girl.

As one leaving a reverie, he came down the steps and spoke. "May I pay your bill, good woman?" he asked. All the time he was speaking he looked at Rose.

She walked away to Jeminy, who was murmuring: "How noble! Isn't it fine of him?"

The throng was still and intent upon his movements as he took a gold piece from his pocket and cast it to the host with a kindly grace.

"Oh, milord—my good sir! I can never thank you. The devotion and love of Arabella Durant are all yours—laid humbly at your feet." The old puppet-woman bent her knee stiffly, like one of her queer little puppets, then began picking up her bundles.

The man drew away and the ring of loiterers gave a final laugh at her action. The tooting of the returning *Mouse of the Mountain* grew louder. "This is the last boat to-night. You can't see the clock over the river," called a voice from the balcony.

He's English, too, came the gay thought to Rose. They all began moving towards the dock, Mr. Heard on the *Lady Franklin*, encouraging his nags with an occasional hearty "Gee-long."

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"'Twas a kind action, sir," said Jeminy, turning to the young man, who was only a few rods away.

Rose tried in vain to hold her back.

"I'm glad to have been of service to your troupe," he replied, with a direct glance at Rose.

Jeminy was about to reply when the girl pulled her gown. The latter's face was flaming. "He saw us in Amboy and took us for— Oh, I know he despises us!" she thought. Rose felt as if she were sinking under a weight of shame. "Come, Jeminy," she whispered. "Why did you speak?" They were hurrying now before their creaking coach. "He thinks we belong to the puppet-show. Oh, how inky the water looks! I'm afraid, Jem—afraid of what's on the other side!"

X

Courtlandt Street before the Curtain Rises

AH, Courtlandt Street, how sweet you were on that August night so long ago! As the concourse of passengers left the ferry-boat a large, round moon came out from behind a cloud and made the rising stretch of cobble-stone road white and full of mystery. Two lines of young poplars trembled like silver-frosted fairy bouquets, wafting delicate flower scents, strayed from distant gardens, into the very faces of the travellers. The river-damp died away before the balminess, and the midsummer night, cool for the season, seemed haunted by some soft and gentle ghost of spring-time bringing in her wake a host of vanished things, perfume of June roses, memories of old loves, and the dreams which slumber in the back alleys of men's hearts.

Mr. Heard led his nags out under the sheds and then climbed up the side steps of the Lady Franklin. The window was open and he thrust

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his head in. "We're here," he said; "and soon we'll be a-parting."

They had thanked him over and over again on the river, and now they repeated the same protestations of gratitude.

"I'll keep mum—'deed so," he answered, shaking his head. "'Od rabbit it, all the Barkers in Ambo' won't get a word out of me."

"Barkers!" repeated Rose, her face expressing her fears. "I had forgotten them!"

The street was full of scurrying feet making sharp, metallic sounds. "There's old Mr. Punch a second time," one of the wags who had accompanied them in the *Mouse of the Mountain* called out. The puppet-show people passed with the little dog Fido wearing a clown's hat and a frilled red jacket. A man's rich tenor voice was lilting the new air of "Home, Sweet Home." Bluecoats paused as the words rolled out:

"To thee I'll return, overburdened with care,
The heart's dearest solace will smile on me there;
No more from that cottage again will I roam,
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home."

The voice grew faint and fainter as its happy possessor hurried off towards Dock Street.

Mr. Heard cocked his head on one side, and,

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although his left foot was on the ground, still kept the other on the Lady Franklin. "It makes me think of the tunes the governor sang," he muttered. "Lud, he'd always sing if there was a thimbleful of wind in him." He put one hand to an ear and listened to the dying cadences. "I whetter I'm glad I'm here to see my lady," he said, softly.

The women had scarcely heard him, although the song had left a soothing impression upon them. Jeminy was piling up the hat-boxes in the seat behind the driver and straightening the china-silk handkerchief over the starling's cage. "We'll call you Georgie, now, and the White-bushes will think we named you after his most gracious and Christian majesty. Chirp up, King Georgie, and scare away the shade of George Washington." As she bent over the cage she glanced sideways at Rose, hoping to see a smile light up her face. All the way from Amboy their spirits had played this game of pitch-and-toss. First one and then the other fell into a low mood. "You've had the blue-devils longest. Not a word over the river. Cheer up, girl. See the moon and catch that scent in the air." Miss Clarissa Wildairs was almost executing a dance on the little square of damask carpet separating the two seats.

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A pretty picture the girl made as she sat there half leaning out of the old-gold lacquered window—a pretty picture in the glow of the big August moon which has smiled on nearly a hundred fleeting summers since then. The hat once worn by her mother as Lady Townley drooped over her face and threw soft shadows on the radiant hair and the eyes, which were following two figures entering the only vehicle under the shed—a ramshackle hackney-coach.

“Cecil Marlton, London,” she read. “All the English in the States have arrived on the *Mouse of the Mountain*, it seems,” she said, giving that fair head a toss.

Jeminy followed her gaze.

The youth she had thanked with such a disastrous result was directing his rummy-looking coachman, while his servant, evidently overjoyed at having found a master, stood gaping foolishly in the road.

Jeminy spread out her gown before she spoke. “Impertinent,” she cried. “I have always hated the English.”

“Oh, Jem, don’t say that! Why, you’re English now.”

“La, I forget,” came the laughing reply.

The Lady Franklin started off with a groan.

Before the Curtain Rises

At each new stone she throbbed out her tire, and several times gave sly, unexpected lurches. In fact, she behaved like a saucy old dame ready to fly into a tantrum without a moment's notice. Her driver did not know quite what to make of her. "A little easy, my lady," he'd chortle. "Where's your manners, ma'am? 'Tisn't a minuet. There's no scraping spark on your heels. Who'd have thought the town would ha' this effect?" he exclaimed, at last, quite angrily.

To Rose the moments dragged very slowly. Of what was she thinking? Of that coach which had passed them and was lost in the darkness? Of her mother's face in the miniature she wore beneath her gown? Of Jepson Barker clanging the knocker on the door of the old Terrill castle and finding her gone—gone? The noises of the wharves grew very faint and the racket of the vehicle beneath her hideously loud—so loud that she seemed to throb with it, and the whole world to throb with her in some terrible, unexplainable nightmare.

Streams of a brighter light swept into the coach. They were passing York House, the Courtlandt Street hotel. They could hear the cracking and crunching of ice going on in the bar-

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room. The place was famous for its mint-juleps, just concocted in this year. Some rowdies outside the door ogled at Jemima, who sat on the right, and the "guest-catcher" roared out: "This way for handsome lodgings. The best in the city! Stop where Mr. Paulding, the mayor, stops. Stop at the abode of refinement and aristocracy with three soups for dinner at one-half the City Hotel charges!"

Just beyond was a garden, and the remains of some good Dutchman's orchard. The street grew narrower there, and the Lady Franklin took the curve with two or three tremendous jolts. Rose touched Jeminy's hand and put her head out of the window again. "Call me Caroline," she whispered. "Say it over a dozen times. We're almost there, and my heart— Oh, feel my heart!"

Jeminy repeated it once very softly, thinking of her last visit to Courtlandt Street. No, the black man would never recognize her, and old Mr. Whitebush was asleep in Trinity's yard. She leaned over and took the starling's cage in her lap, mentally counting the seconds until that brocaded door would swing back. "Be brave, Clarissa Wildairs," she was muttering. "Be brave for Sally's sake. Give them a piece of

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acting worthy of Dunlap. Pluck up! Pluck up!" she called aloud, as if she were addressing some invisible regiment behind her.

They were in the very kernel of Courtlandt Street, the Courtlandt Street which the notorious Baron von Hoffman—then received by the most select members of North River society—compared to a bit of Marseilles stuck on to the Fly Market. A line of stately red-brick houses with white, Doric-columned porches adorned the north side and frowned at the miscellaneous collection of dwellings on the south.

The eager mob swarming through the thoroughfare every hour of the day never pauses to think of that past generation which knew it as a place of residence. Yes, Mr. Modern, this morning when you were hurrying up to Wall Street you glanced at the shop hiding the ruins of the Fairlie domicile. There dwelt the lovely Sophy Sparkle, of Salmagundi fame. The Bitmushes, the Pintards, and old Lady Grumpers across the way knew her as the wife of the heroic Cooper dashing into the street in her sky-blue chariot. Sukey, the eldest of the three Bitmush girls could have told you how young Washington Irving stood before those shattered casements and serenaded his fascinating Fairlie. She knew,

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for wasn't she peering through her own half-closed blinds eating her heart out as the amorous performance was going on in the street. At noon you loitered, smoking your cheroot in the very spot where Jonathan Whitebush often entertained bucks of the Tom-and-Jerry school with his tirades against the tendencies of the times. Fox-hunting Jonathan, what a man he was when away from his silk-gowned sisters! The mockery of their stiffened garments lingers before No. 44 yet. How they hissed as they rustled past the seedy Bitmush girls, who once ruined their claims to gentility by hanging out of a parlor window a little sign with the dire words, "A room to let with all the comforts of home." Matilda, the second sister, fashioned the sign herself with the fast-drying tubes of oil-paint she used in happier times to color tambour-work. For days they wept over it at their scanty meals in the shabby back sitting-room where the portrait of the late Augustus Bitmush smirked above the chimney-piece, supremely unconscious that his offspring were left to the fate of Ruggles codfish and shilling Bohea. Then their first lodger, Mr. Orlando Dimper, arrived, and Sukey crept out at midnight and pulled the sign down, scaring one of

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those somnolent nocturnal functionaries hired to guard the streets.

The haughty ladies of the Whitebush family would cheerfully have ostracized all the occupants of the south side of Courtlandt Street. The presuming Mrs. Bimbleton, who had established a young ladies' seminary in the house once occupied by Mr. Jeremiah Fuddle, was their peculiar abomination. Whether tender memories still hovered about the Fuddle abode for Miss Jane Molesworth Whitebush, or the fact that the Bimbleton inmates sometimes maliciously decorated her passing turban with bread-crusts and other well-aimed particles of food caused her vindictiveness, will never be ascertained. Gazing through the rows of grenadier-like geraniums in her window-boxes, she was always irritated by the brass plate on the gate opposite. In bold lettering it proclaimed to the world:

"EAGLE SEMINARY,

Conducted by Mrs. Susquehanna Bimbleton,
Late Governess to George Washington's Niece."

Perhaps Miss Whitebush, who was a much braver spirit than her sister Marie, did not look upon the memory of a certain great man with the respect she should have. The name of

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Grumpers, delicately engraved on the plate three from Broadway, seemed to her more enviable than the immortal, laurel-bound one. "I would rather be the widow of Sir Samuel Grumpers and of an established quality than any Dandridge or Custis," she enjoyed telling her cousin, Miss Ora Davenport, the heiress, who was the most important member of the household at No. 44. Lady Grumpers never received this confidence, though, for Sir Samuel—red-nosed, reeling Sammie, the only Knickerbocker man of title of his period—was known to have been quite partial to Miss Jane, especially after a sixth glass of her old, three-voyaged Madeira.

The misguided woman was violently British in her sympathies, and her black girl could have told you that she kept her father's red coat hanging up in her own wardrobe. She it was at a later period who led Mrs. Trollope into her green-chintz library and solemnly informed that lady that she had seen American ladies chewing tobacco, and when the famous and deservedly maligned *Domestic Manners of the Americans* came out, declared that it was a perfect picture of life on the south side of Courtlandt Street. Why, wizened Sukey Bitmush, now eagerly watching the Lady Franklin pause hesitatingly before the

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Whitebush door, had informed her friends of queer sounds, suspiciously like "God Save the King," which had issued from the staid north-side mansion during that very afternoon's musical war. The landscape shades were drawn down, it is true, but as Mrs. Bimbleton's two musical pupils battered two groaning spinets, and various nondescript south-side vulgarians driven into action by the racket thumped "Yankee Doodle" and "One Little Girl Loves Me," long-suffering Miss Jane, aware that her family had joined the marine parade wending along Broadway to Castle Clinton, mounted the stairs to her chamber, and, higher still, to her four-poster, where she sat upon a bolster and shrieked in all the interims the favorite anthem of the fatherland.

Those landscape shades were down now, and they gave the dwelling a dreary, formidable appearance. All the north-side houses whispered of nodding inmates — ladies with caps pulled a trifle over the eyes, and gentlemen indulging in newspaper head-coverings. Across the way candles gleamed merrily and sent little mocking rays into the centre of the street.

The coach came to a stand-still.

"He's stopped at the right house," said Je-

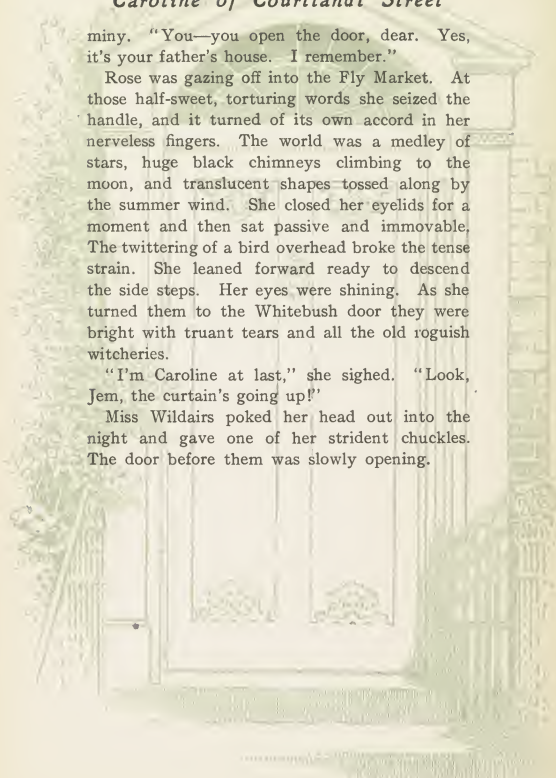
Caroline of Courtlandt Street

miny. "You—you open the door, dear. Yes, it's your father's house. I remember."

Rose was gazing off into the Fly Market. At those half-sweet, torturing words she seized the handle, and it turned of its own accord in her nerveless fingers. The world was a medley of stars, huge black chimneys climbing to the moon, and translucent shapes tossed along by the summer wind. She closed her eyelids for a moment and then sat passive and immovable. The twittering of a bird overhead broke the tense strain. She leaned forward ready to descend the side steps. Her eyes were shining. As she turned them to the Whitebush door they were bright with truant tears and all the old roguish witcheries.

"I'm Caroline at last," she sighed. "Look, Jem, the curtain's going up!"

Miss Wildairs poked her head out into the night and gave one of her strident chuckles. The door before them was slowly opening.





XI

Lights, More Lights for Caroline

THE distant rumble of the Lady Franklin was like a chorus of elfin voices in a dream. Watkins, a negress in a brown print, had pulled most of Miss Caroline Didear Whitebush's boxes into the hall. A dog was making a muffled uproar in a near-by closet, and between his barks they popped questions at her.

"And so you came all the way from London city?" the littlest and most vivacious of the three women repeated.

Rose stood in the doorway between the puffs of India work half leaning on a tall-backed chair. The two candles on the ombre-table left her partly in shadow. In one hand she swung the starling's cage, and the bird flew about, not knowing what to make of the strange attention. A proud smile curved her lips, and she held her dainty head very high in the air; but oh, how tired she was! If Jeminy's protecting form had

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not been just behind her she felt that she should fall, and yet she must stand there and laugh—laugh and wheedle until she fought her way into their lives.

“Jonathan’s not at home,” the frilled one, who wore a cap resembling a starched antimacassar on her head, was saying. “He’s gone to a meeting of the Toe Club. Vulgar name for a social organization, isn’t it?”

“Yes, in England we’d put a boot on it,” piped Miss Wildairs. She grinned from sheer pleasure as she thought of the way they were gobbling the hooks.

“Oh, I can’t get over the shock you gave us! Fancy falling out of the heavens upon our chess-board! We always play chess—it’s so English. Jane never lets us forget the respect we owe our mother-country; do you, Jane? The Whitebushes were always such a leading family in Sussex—as you well know. Lady Grumpers, our neighbor, will be greatly surprised. She’s expecting a foreigner. I think she said it wasn’t a lady—it must be a man—and here we’ve all the English quality there is in the city.” Marie’s chirruping ended in a gurgle.

There’s one other, mused Rose—one other who seemed mysteriously bound up in her fate.

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A smile at Amboy. The little speech at Paulus Hook across the river—words which still rankled and stung. And yet when she tried to recall them the memory of the smile always came back. Where was he journeying? Would she ever see him again? He looked like her ideal Prince Charming, but Cophetua did not say, "Beggar maid, I am too far above you!" If she could only meet him once more as Caroline—Caroline of Courtlandt Street.

As she repeated the words to herself a new influx of courage swept over her. The scene with Jepson Barker flitted before her eyes. Heaven forbid that she should ever be *his* Rose! She was a wild Rose, she knew; and here at her feet was a cultivated garden, a thousand times fairer than the one he had boasted of. All she need do was to "pluck up," as Jeminy would say—"act as if she were accustomed to riding in a coach-and-four or a coach-and-six, wearing a string of diamonds and a new gown every night of the year, and listening to the populace cry: 'Make way for the beautiful Caroline! Give a lord's daughter the first place! Ah, there she goes—the Honorable Caroline Didear Whitebush!'"

Jane was entering the room, followed by Wat-

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kins carrying a tray of biscuits and a decanter of wine. She walked with majestic strides, holding her head haughtily. Some of her steps were almost tragical—especially when the puce-colored silk gave sudden leaps.

"And your dear aunt, Lady Didear, is well, I trust? I've heard my father speak of her—often," she said.

"And Eliza—that funny Eliza he told us of?" broke in Ora Davenport's voice.

Miss Whitebush frowned at her cousin for interrupting, but did not correct her publicly as she oftentimes did Marie.

Rose glanced at Miss Wildairs helplessly. Eliza! There was nothing in the red book about her. Was she a daughter, a sister, or a cousin? She wondered if she dared say she was enjoying good health.

"Eliza?" she said, aloud.

"Yes, Eliza; your aunt's pug."

"Ah, she's been dead these five years—she took to drinking lavender-water," smirked Jeremy. "And may the saints forgive me," she added, under her breath.

Rose did not touch the refreshments, but crept over to a window. The happy, care-free moonshine beyond the flower-box beckoned to her.

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No, she must not gaze at its bewildering entreaties. She needed to keep her eyes on those chattering women—to watch every movement. The battle had only just begun. They believed her story so far, the one called Miss Ora even displaying a certain amount of affection for her. How she hated them and all their elegant mannerisms! She kept repeating the word hate, *hate* to herself as she viewed the formal, stuffed-back cabriole chairs with their prim little valances, the tall, sepulchral Nast vases, and the marbles over the books. It was a Barker room, only on a larger scale; a stifling prison for any one who had to live in it day in and day out. Jepson might be suited with it—Madam Barker would feel at home there—the Whitebushes liked it! *She* was there to jeer—to mock and suit her ends! When the dawn came she could fly off to Dunlap,—her mother's dear old Dunny—away from the danger into a glowing happiness. Then she forgot and gazed through the interstices of the night to her happy dreams smiling in the distance like a crowd of primroses in a shadowy field. Claspings her hands ecstatically, she turned her head, aware again of her perilous situation.

"Thomas—is he another pug?" Miss Wildairs was saying, her mouth partially stuffed with biscuit.

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"Sir Percival Thomas who wrote *The Ladies' Wreath* and visited America three years ago!" Miss Marie was becoming very much flustered; their cousin's companion evidently possessed an atrociously bad memory.

"Oh yes, of course I know him," she answered, with as great elaboration as her hunger would allow; "he took me in to dinner at Lady Blessington's."

"Lady Blessington's!" the three women chorused.

Miss Whitebush dropped her ball of worsted. "You shock me," she said. "Why, only yesterday Lady Grumpers was telling us ladies never visited the Blessington female."

"A woman might," said Jeminy, simply.

She arose, letting her silken gown stand alone. Their eyes were upon it, she knew—speculating on its probable cost. Sallie bought good stuff for Miss Hardcastle, she remembered with satisfaction. Now was the time to show her mettle. "A woman of my quality can do as she pleases," said she, and she eyed Jane as she spoke the words. The creature was like a huge ferret, always inquiring and watching, and the knowledge of it made her reckless.

There was a momentary silence—then a door opened in the distance.

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"Did you ever—ever know a queen?" Miss Ora asked, much impressed.

"A *queen!*" repeated Jeminy, scornfully, giving one of her queer, derisive chuckles as she looked over and winked at Rose. "A *queen!* why, bless me, I was intimate with Charlottel!"

"Intimate with the mother of the present king? Oh!"

"She had two legs, and they weren't golden ones," continued Jeminy; "five fingers on each hand, a nose, a mouth—and she wore a false front just as you and I do."

"Oh, ma'am," gasped the elegant Miss Ora. "I don't"—bending nearer and whispering—"that is, not a whole false front."

"I was only speaking metaphorically," said the grandiloquent Miss Wildairs, promenading before her chair. "I'm sure I never should have imagined your hair wasn't real—my own is," she added, giving it a pull, "but her majesty's, that's a different matter."

"Lady Grumpers will be pleased." Jane looked up from her knitting. "She was presented at court before Sir Samuel honored her with his hand. He was always at *our* house in those days. Miss Burney gave her much information about the private life at the palace."

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Miss Wildairs smiled. "I wonder if she did wear a false front," she was thinking.

While this conversation was going on, Rose, looking out into the street, saw a man's dark form obscure the view. The fellow doffed his hat to her in a formal, old-fashioned style, and as he turned to mount the steps she caught sight of a merry, weather-beaten countenance brimming over with good-humor.

"There's a gentleman coming in; he just bowed to me," she said, interrupting.

"Oh, I'm sure it's Jonathan, and I wasn't by the window," sighed Miss Ora, plaintively.

"She always waits for him," whispered Marie into Jemima's ear.

"I'll go," said Miss Whitebush, jangling her keys. "He has gone into the study. I heard the knob turn a full minute ago."

"Let me!"

Marie had reached Jane's side.

"You can't," the elder returned. "Didn't you read him the *Gazette* before dinner? And Ora made him some peach marmalade out of those late peaches Mrs. Fairlie sent over from the south side—not that marmalade made from south-side peaches is ever very tasty. You're both of you trying to supplant me in my own

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brother's affections. I'm the eldest, and it's my duty to surprise him."

The two guests exchanged glances—there were other comedies in No. 44 besides their own.

"We are so fond of Jonathan," said Marie, apologetically. "You see, in the first place, he's very good to us. He looks the finest and most considerable gentleman in all York, I think, sometimes, when he comes up Trinity's aisle with Ora on his arm. You should observe him take snuff! He rivals the great Nash, Lady Grumpers says—"

"La, what a paragon! I think I'll set my cap for him, too," smirked Miss Wildairs. "The breed must have changed," she murmured, under her breath.

"Oh, Jeminy!" exclaimed Rose; then she blushed, fearing that she had betrayed herself.

"Jeminy!" said Miss Ora. "What a funny English expression!"

Then they all laughed, each to hide a different emotion as the peerless Jonathan—"King Solomon of Courtlandt Street," Lady Grumpers once nicknamed him—entered the room followed by his sister.

As he bent low his two guests eyed him eagerly. A voice was throbbing in Jeminy's memory, "Tell her to look in Bedlam!" Yes, the breed

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had changed since her first knock at the White-bush door twenty years before. His costume was almost waggish. A green coat, cream-colored pantaloons bound with the new shade, Waterloo, and neck and wrist ruffles. The man was *all* frills. And yet there was not a hint of coxcombry about him, only a dashing spirit of gayety permeating his countenance and demeanor. He had never learned the code of old bachelordom with its provokingly naked niceties. Here was a strong man who had halted on the road to age and laughed at time's efforts to furrow his sunbronzed cheeks.

Rose went forward. She felt at once as if she would like to lay her tired head on his shoulder and call him "Uncle Jonathan." There was a wholesome freshness about him that rested her, the vital magnetism a strong man always holds for a strong woman.

"Welcome, my little English cousin—and you, Miss Wildairs," he said, taking both of Rose's cold hands in his.

"I must not care for you," the girl thought, and yet each time he spoke she smiled unconsciously.

"What a brave lassie to travel all the way from England! To-morrow, Jane here, will get

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out every scarlet rag in the house and Mr. President will be after us. Why, Caroline—I hope you'll let me call you Cousin Caroline—you have arrived just in time for the Lafayette celebration. His ship, the *Cadmus*, is due in a day or two. Then there'll be a *third* distinguished visitor in Gotham." He bowed very gallantly a second time.

She was trembling. A mist rose before her eyes. His words held a tenderness that for the moment dashed away her mask and left her speechless.

Everybody was standing, for Jane had called for more lights.

Jonathan took one of the candles from the trembling Watkins. It was the black's duty to bring them into the drawing-room the moment her master's key turned in the latch, but the night's unusual bustle had quite overcome the woman.

"Look!" he said, holding the stick aloft, and leading Rose to the end of the room where a row of portraits hung. "She's the image of our grandmother, Dorothy Desbrosses. 'Tis a pretty freak of fate. We're vastly proud of our Lely."

"And the one by her side in the blue coat—the one looking off over those smiling fields—" She

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knew she was gazing at her father as a young man. It was a daring move, but she wanted to fan her hate into flame again. "Who is he?" she asked.

"Ah, he left us to go a-gypsying long before you were born, child. This old house is his home, but he is too proud to come back," he replied, speaking slowly.

"To go a-gypsying!" Was there a little catch in the cheery voice. "A-gypsying! I love that word," she cried, defiantly.

"Of course you do," he repeated, in all innocence. A smile was wreathing his face again. "You're just wild to explore the hearts of the whole town from Cherry Street up to Canal. And, egad, you will!" he said. "The bucks will rave over you. Tish!" he sighed, catching his breath. "I feel one of your tiny slippers on mine already."

Later, after the ceremonious "good-nights" and Jeminy's final congratulatory visit to her chamber, Rose pondered happily upon his words. She had come to her land of dear illusions. Over those geranium flowers, purple and indistinct in the deep dusk, over the stretch of shadowy roofs, somewhere in the distance wound the Park Theatre Alley—the lane her mother so

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often footed at this very hour. She was pursuing her along the cool flags back to the hazy glories of the old Park. Was there a battered, rickety stage door at the end of the alley nowadays? she wondered. "Cupid's Trap" the wits who loitered about Ann and Beekman streets once called it. Did Mrs. O'Flarety still lean over her little counter behind the diamond-paned window at the corner and tickle the gallants with her quaint fancies as they bought stiff bouquets for "the Darling of the Park"? "There's a sprig of oleander," she imagined her saying, "sure 'tis truer than the rose, and a bit of scenty jasmine to make her sigh for you—some forget-me-nots—even the biggest dullard among you knows what they're for—leaves of floating-heart and sprays of false pimpernel to cuss your rivals. Now we're ready for a jacket, sir! A pretty nosegay-holder. Mind you don't throw it at her and interrupt the play, or Mr. Dunlap will be selling your mother out, and there'll be no Flarety on Ann Street to gaze at your bonny parts." She remembered all Jeminy's stray reminiscences. Who was running down the alley to-night as Sallie used to do? Would she be treading it soon, followed by a crowd of sparks, rusk-boys, and chimney-sweeps? A witch

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light flared in the sky, and for a moment her weary head was filled with sweeter thoughts. The Englishman's smile haunted her again. Yes, there must be a Castle To-Morrow!

XII

The Comedy Begins

A ROSY summer dawn crept up Courtlandt Street like some mysterious angel, and tapped at every window with her vapory hands. In the wan sky all the stars had twinkled out, but the moon still burned funeral pyres over the ashes of a perfect night.

The Honorable Caroline Whitebush turned on the lavender - scented pillow of cool, homespun linen and wondered where she was. An old gilt coach, travel-stained and weary, was bumping out of her dreams. For hours it seemed to have followed her over the gravestones in St. Paul's Garden of Rest, through Lady Grumpers's bit of grass-plot, past the Terrill Castle, in Amboy, where Jepson Barker leered at her seated on the weather-vane, into a mysterious tavern filled with a maudlin concourse bent double with mirth at the antics of a nightcapped Mr. Heard and a ghostly Lady Franklin.

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Streams of light broke through the flowered chintz curtains, and the pale outlines of the houses on the south side of Courtlandt Street began to appear. Yes, she remembered. He had asked to kiss her hand as he bade her good-night on the upper landing, bowing "a peaceful rest" to the gushing Miss Ora and each of his sisters, like some Sir Roger de Coverley. She disentangled the picture from a maze of flitting impressions and dwelt upon it rapturously. It was homage to her beauty. There was no kindness in the action, she tried to tell herself. "He admires me in the same fashion he does a fine piece of horseflesh—that wonderful Eclipse he told us of last evening. If he knew, he would join the others in turning me out at once."

She wanted to hate him, and yet she could not. He was such a delightful old man, a hero from one of her worn play-books; and he was hers—her own uncle—her father's brother. She remembered the soft notes in his voice when they had looked at Robert Whitebush's portrait. He had not guessed, even then. And his hair was like crisp snowflakes, or a silver powder concocted by immortals. She loved his hair, she told herself, as she drank in the fresh, flower-scented air. Some day she would tell him all. Some day—perhaps. He

The Comedy Begins

was too much of an old-school gentleman ever to suspect her. He would never discover the rôle she was playing by himself—but the women! How deliciously she had fooled them all. Was she really a person of quality, or had her haughty, beak-nosed Whitebushes become a flock of lambkins?

The dawn was growing brighter and the birds in the gardens across the way joined their sleepy chorusing to the cock-crows in the distance. What will to-day's story be, she wondered. At that moment she was conscious only of a blissful feeling of languor. She sighed like a happy child in a world of make-believe, as she smoothed the sheets with her hot hands. Her father could not find her. Jepson Barker could not find her. She was safe in a haven that was hers by right. That wonderful and elusive Castle To-Morrow had opened its golden gates at last, and she had crept in, a tired little waif, to feast on its wines of hope, song, happiness, and *love*, she whispered to herself. Love was the most beautiful thing under the sun; all her mother's books told her that, and Prince Charming was sure to seek her out.

Then the picture of Amboy came to her. The sun was rising over Jersey lands, too. Oh, sweet home country whose green breast had been a fos-

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tering mother! Would she ever stand on the Terrill balcony again and sing as the High Street huntsmen rode away? Would she ever listen in the dim powdering-closet for her father's unsteady footsteps? By this time he must have seen Girard. Was he journeying homeward counting another broken scheme? She imagined the town in a frenzy of gossip when he went in search of her. Whom would he ask? Jepson Barker? The name came to her lips unconsciously. "Jepson Barker," she said, aloud, "I defy you!"

She lay there staring at the pattern of the wall-paper for a space of minutes that seemed a long time, and presently her eyes closed and she drifted into a peaceful slumber. When she awoke again the servants had placed the old Terrill trunk before the ponderous mahogany dresser, and it smiled at her across the room.

"What shall I don to-day, George Washington," she called, merrily, to the starling whose cage reposed upon a spindle-legged table, "the peach mull for 'She Stoops to Conquer' or the scarlet jessamy for 'The Road to Ruin'?"

"Conk-quer-rée," it answered, and the notes were flutelike and alluring.

"That means to cozen them, I suppose, you sly bird."

The Comedy Begins

She ran down the bed-steps and threw back one of the window-curtains. The street was already a scene of bustle and life. Farm wagons were passing, laden with stout Bergen yokels chattering in resonant Dutch over the coming of the French hero, who had once before visited their stockaded town in the company of General Washington. Broadway was a ribbon of changeful humanity. A multitude of clerks and apprentices in holiday attire was hurrying towards the parade, eager to be among the first to gaze at the ship which had borne such a precious burden from Havre. Some of the Bimbleton young ladies were by their windows taking off nightcaps and complexion masks. A daring, fresh-faced miss poked her head out for a peep at York House. Men were nailing up transparencies there, making ready for a gala night. The distance was full of strange discords which grew louder with the rising of the sun.

"Little old New York, I love you," Rose whispered, drinking in all the exhilaration and rhythm of the passing throng. "A few hours, and then—Dunlap."

"Hurrah for Lafayette! Hurrah for the nation's friend!" came up from below.

The populace would some day call that way for her.

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She pulled open the Terrill trunk, thinking of the lonely Park Theatre one in the attic at home. Tenderly drawing out her mother's garments, she heard subdued voices in the hall and the noise of scurrying footsteps. She crept to the door and listened, feeling like a thief.

A negress was talking to her aunts on the landing.

"What a fright you gave us, Marmona! We thought—" stammered Miss Marie.

"We didn't think at all," said her elder sister, severely. Rose pictured to herself the look which accompanied that reproachful remark.

"Pardon, missy, but I felt mayhap yo' like to know the ole one that came last night—"

"The what?" cried her head mistress.

"The ole ladyship is tucked out in satten." There was a gasp, showing that the girl enjoyed the effect the information had upon her audience.

Rose wrung her hands. "Jeminy's vanity will undo us. Satin in the morning! Poor dear, it's all because she's worn sackcloth for so long." She wanted to go to her just as she was, but the voice began again.

"Shall we change our mohairs?" asked Miss Marie.

"H'm!" said Jane, endeavoring to hide her



"SHE CREPT TO THE DOOR AND LISTENED, FEELING LIKE A THIEF"

The Comedy Begins

surprise. "So you've been looking through key-holes again, Marmona!"

"No, no, missy; she pulled the bell for a boliver."

"A boliver, Marmona?"

"Yas, missy; that's what we call gin-and-water in Hobuck."

"Alcoholic stimulants, and our noble relative's companion has been in the house *one* night!"

"It must be an English fashion," whispered the other.

"Shocking," said Jane. "I never suspected Lady Grumpers of such a habit."

"I tol' her yo' was temp'rance ladies, missy, 'cept whar the gen'lemens was consarned."

"Well, what did she say?"

"She said, says she, 'New York is a low-down place to be took wid a pain!'"

"Oh!" exclaimed both ladies.

Rose shut the door and tiptoed across the room. "She can't do any more mischief until I get down," she concluded.

She dressed hurriedly, and a few moments later found her way through the silent hall to Jeminy's quarters.

Miss Wildairs lay upon her bed in a stiff green satin gown. "I'm ill, dear," she said, bouncing

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up. "They want me to have their doctor, but I daren't, for he is an Englishman. If he examined me closely he might be able to find out that I wasn't what I am. I told them I was ashamed to call him; it is such a long time since I was last day-bedded. See, sweet, what I've been drinking." She held up a gin bottle.

"I'm sorry," the girl said, bending over and smoothing her hair. "But, Jem, dear, this gown in the morning!"

"Why, I put it on for the general."

Rose laughed.

"Come here, darling," she said, beckoning to her and replacing the bottle. "I've learned from one of the niggers the Park's closed. If I can't get up to-day you'll have to find Dunny by yourself. It won't be wise to loiter here long, for the old one's sly. Go to the box-office and you will meet with a ticket-seller who can give you his address. Ah, Mr. William Dunlap will teach you how to follow in your mother's footsteps! Poor Sallie would have been against it. Perhaps I'm doing wrong — perhaps I'm doing right," she ended, with a long-drawn-out sigh.

"Cousin Caroline!" some one called outside the door.

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"Sh—" said Jeminy, as Rose answered "Come in."

There was a momentary flutter, and the bird-like Marie entered. Both of the occupants of the room observed her silken gown with a gasp.

"This green satin did it," Jemima's triumphant eyes said.

The curve in Caroline's lips showed the other that she gave her the credit for setting the fashion.

"Oh, my dears, what do you think? Lady Grumpers is below talking to Ora. Jane hasn't finished dressing yet. She saw your coach last night—it *was* a queer old coach—and became so wild with curiosity to find out about our visitors that she scarcely slept a wink after putting on her nightcap. Lady Grumpers always takes a nap on the sofa before bed," she added, in explanation. "Poor thing, she occupies such a high position she's intimate with few people out of Hudson Square, and if we weren't on Courtlandt Street she'd be quite lonely."

"Miss Wildairs can't come down," Rose said, looking regretfully at the bed. Her heart was sinking again. She was about to meet her first titled person.

"I'm sorry—so sorry," the other murmured,

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sympathetically. "Lady Grumpers is in a common print. Of course, she's not in a position to know the latest mode."

By the door Miss Marie playfully tapped the girl's arm with cousinly regard. "'Tis vastly becoming, that pink. I forgot to tell you there's some one with her."

"Who?" whispered Rose, shrinking back, but the hurrying figure by her side did not hear.

"He will be entranced. I think he must be a poet, for he wears collars just like Mr. McDonald Clarke's, a scribbler always lounging on Broadway."

The golden summer sunshine was streaming into the passage over the faded mosques and shrines in the Turkey carpet. The front door was wide open, and the hum of the street reached the staircase. Robins fluted in Courtlandt Street gardens then, and Rose heard them whistling their madrigals of thanks for the heavenly day as she paused to gather up her skirts by one of the balusters.

"As fair and as fresh as the morning," a voice said behind her.

She looked back and beheld her dapper uncle bowing in mock humility.

"What did I tell you!" he laughed, shaking a

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finger and making his wrist ruffles dance merrily. "The street's already agog. Madam Grumpers is here after the new styles. My, but she is a penetrating woman! I believe she'd creep through a crack. There's a beau, too, so Marie piped into my nightcap. Ah!" he continued, drinking in the sunshine, "the great Lafayette is due to-day. He may disappoint us though, for celebrities never arrive on time. Flags up at Fairlies' and Bitmushes'. Well, well, Jane will be getting out the pater's red coat to spite the neighbors."

Rose did not look at the street, but bent over the railing for a peep at the guests. A large woman in a much-beflowered print was seated on a hall settle talking volubly to Miss Ora. She arose at the sound of footsteps, and out into the sunlight there strolled a handsome blond youth with a careless saunter.

The Honorable Caroline Whitebush felt a strange desire to turn and run up that staircase before he saw her. Two blush roses burned in her cheeks as red as those which Venus threw to An-cenius.

Would he remember her? She had longed to see him again—longed to show him her quality, and here he had fallen at her feet, without warning, like a thunderbolt.

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She found herself bowing to Lady Grumpers—bowing in the stiff-jointed manner of the puppet-doll which had given him cause to insult Jeminy while waiting for the *Mouse of the Mountain*.

"And may I present Mr. Cecil Marlton?" asked Miss Ora, simpering.

As the girl lifted her head and held out her hand, she felt that the man opposite her was visibly embarrassed. "The dummy will ruin me, I must foil his silly wits," flashed through her brain.

"We have met before, I think," she murmured, softly, letting her skirts caress his riding-boots.

Lady Grumpers raised her big, dark eyes. She looked first at Jonathan, and then studied every face in the room. "Why, what a coincidence!" she exclaimed.

"My memory's only tolerably middling—perhaps 'twas at court a season past," said Caroline, dimpling, and smiling into the wondering face opposite hers.

XIII

To the Tune of "Yankee Doodle"

"AM I awake in broad daylight?" the young man asked himself. A night ago he had seen her first, when dashing over the moonlit Amboy road. Could this girlish vision have been with the puppet-troupe across the river? It was impossible to conceive such a thing, and yet he recognized that clear-cut profile, the hair that knew all the little witcheries of sunshine and moonshine, the eyes so alluring, and the warm, red mouth made for kissing or for smiling.

He stole another glance at her as she moved away.

Only a woman of quality could walk with that easy, graceful glide. The dark curtains and the great, blue Staffordshire punch-bowl filled with lemon verbena made an enchanting background for the diaphanous thing she wore. He mentally compared her to a flower. Then he hit upon a rose and was pleased with the idea. Who was she?

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He was willing to believe anything, but oh!—the name of Caroline Whitebush—that was going a bit too far! “The deuce take it!” he said to himself, wonderingly.

All the while her guilty heart was beating in the same frantic fashion it had when the Lady Franklin was rolling up Courtlandt Street. Would he tell? What would he tell? Was there anything to tell? He really knew nothing, and she could defy him. After all, she *was* a Whitebush. There was some consolation in that. She had not left her Jersey shores to play the part of an interloper, but had come like a princess to take her own kingdom by strategy. She held her head a trifle higher. Then she looked at him over the fragrant shrub beloved by the old Greeks as an ointment for their heroes, and something in his face made her smile.

Outside Colonel Spicer’s brigade started up the air of “Yankee Doodle.”

“Shut the windows, Jonathan, and lessen the diabolical racket,” Miss Whitebush called. “I may have great respect for General Marquis de Lafayette, but I dislike having the present conversation interrupted.”

“’Tis a gross impertinence! Can’t they move on to York House,” echoed Lady Grumpers.

The grand mogul of Courtlandt Street, as the

To the Tune of "Yankee Doodle"

Bitmushes and other ostracized south-side residents once derisively dubbed Sir Samuel's widow, was much disturbed. She had departed from her mansion with the pleasing reflection that she was entertaining the only visitor of fashion in New York. General Morton and Mrs. Hamilton might angle for the Frenchman if they cared to, but Cecil Marlton, her husband's kinsman and heir to the baronetcy of Grantham, was of more importance, in her opinion, than any frog-eater, however celebrated. And now to be met by an honorable— It was impossible to believe that the battered old coach she spied last twilight had contained any one but a country cousin the Whitebushes would try to hide away. She moved uneasily on her cushion, and her rolling eyes took in the circle of silken gowns. Silk in the morning! Jane had planned it to embarrass her—she knew Jane, she told herself as she hit her fat hands with her quizzing-glass, and wished frantically that she were back in Grumpers House.

Suddenly she gave a sniff of reproof, and vented her surprise aloud. The Whitebushes looked as if they were going to a reception, and they hadn't partaken of breakfast. It was absurd.

"Everybody does it in London," said Jane, haughtily. "Of course, it is not to be expected

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that *all* New York should know what is considered good form in the *world's* metropolis."

Lady Grumpers glared at Jane. "These are degenerate times," she asserted. "When I visited London even the queen sipped her first cup of tea in a print."

"For my part," smiled the peace-loving Jonathan, advancing, "I think there is nothing like a calimanco, and I beg to be permitted to express my humble admiration of the pomegranate design your ladyship is wearing."

"Pomegranates, sir!—they're gillyflowers."

"Dash my buttons!" said the crushed Jonathan, humbly, then he tiptoed out of the room, his footsteps catching the tune outside of the windows.

Rose never knew quite why she did it. Perhaps it was because his eyes followed her about so persistently. The rollicking music in the street may have filled her brain with little imps. When the preliminary skirmish was over, and the ladies eager to devour her asked the newest styles in caps, she looked at Lady Grumpers's modest frill, and boldly declared that caps were worn very large.

"And gowns, ma'am?" asked her ladyship, breathlessly.

"They're—twice—the—size—of—your—own," answered the girl, pretending to hesitate.

To the Tune of "Yankee Doodle"

"I know it!" roared Lady Grumpers, triumphantly, her anger shifting. "I know that sneaking, oily Madam Bouchard is an impostor! She fools *all* you women"—glaring at the circle and making Ora tremble in spite of Jane's support. "Why, if she told you the peers of the realm were wearing smocks to Parliament, you'd believe her jargon." Her ladyship had entirely forgotten that she was the point of the story.

A cannonade of questions followed that almost shattered the forces of the Honorable Caroline—the clear wits and the ever-ready imagination. She set the London world on a revolving pivot, and twirled it about on her dainty, shell-like fingers in the manner of a court-jester. The visitors forgot to leave for breakfast when the hall-clock struck the hour of nine. No one could get over the startling intelligence that the court wore pink slippers to prayer-meeting.

"Oh, terrible days, that actor-folk should be taken into the best society—seen with dukes and duchesses in public gardens! Kew did you say? I went there once as a girl, before Sir Samuel courted me."

"They wouldn't be received here in this house," said Jane, indignantly, looking all the while at the stout, wriggling figure opposite. Why was

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she so fond of bringing up Samuel Grumpers's early mistakes in her presence?

"But you could receive them easier than some families," the other retorted, and every one excepting Lady Grumpers's guest knew just what was meant.

He was gazing over the verberna, alternately amused and indignant. The scene almost approached the heights of burlesque. What right did this girl have to fool these simple old people? Who was she, and why was she there? Sometimes he felt an impulse to denounce her and call her to account for a dozen far-fetched impositions. His mind gradually became disabused of the idea that she had been with the puppet-show troupe. She was a clever, beautiful trickster, there was no doubt of that, but what did it all mean? Where was she drifting—dragging him with her? He wasn't dazed, he assured himself. His American relative sat on the green sofa. Those ladies about the room were her friends. He was Cecil Marlton, of London, visiting the States in search of matter for a new book. And the jade opposite was Caroline Whitebush—the Honorable Caroline! Every time he thought of her name he smothered a guffaw.

To the Tune of "Yankee Doodle"

When the sunshine hid among the poplar leaves and the light in the room grew gray and sad-colored, a feeling of pity crept into his heart for her. A pallor tinged her cheeks when they spoke so dispraisingly of the people of the theatre. Were those tears in the soft eyes? The other woman's eyes seemed to grow sharper in that dim light. She was a part of some great mystery—caught in its meshes like a moth. No one could say that she wasn't beating the life out of her frail wings bravely. She would venture a little too far soon and fall like a singed creature. Those old eyes that had learned so much about the humankind would discover her then. He observed for the first time that her gown was a trifle strange as she crossed to the window.

The Lady Franklin was passing, followed by a curious crowd. Adoniram was going back to Jersey without waiting for a glimpse of the popular hero. He was tired of the noise and bustle of York—tired in one night, he told himself as he scanned the Courtlandt Street houses for a glimpse of his passengers. When Rose first gazed upon the street in the dawn he had been visiting his old mistress's tomb at the right of the altar in St. Paul's. "A poor thing for so fine a lady," he soliloquized. "Only a few roses and a little

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urn; and she was always given to gewgaws. I could ha' found her a better one in Ambo'. There's Captain Smybert's all tucked out with angels in the Barracks—his widow could not pay the stone-cutter." Drinks in the city were high, too—far too high—and lacked the age of Jersey spirits. Their "bellows-top" was a trifle bitter, cherry-rum a shilling a glass—flip, his special fancy, could not be procured at all in the summer-time. His trip to York had been a mistake—and the women's soft ways had brought it about. What would Martha say, and what would he say to Martha? "Get back, raggle," he called. "Ne'er seen a coach," he shouted. Then, in the exuberance of his new mood, he gazed at the Whitebush window and doffed his queer old cocked hat.

"Your coach," said Lady Grumpers, looking at Rose; "and the man has actually the impudence to bow to me."

"He must have mistaken you for Cousin Caroline," Jane replied, dryly.

The girl did not answer. The Lady Franklin was rolling away and leaving her behind. There was no possible means of returning home now. She was in her rightful home, she tried to tell herself. Ah, no, she hadn't found it yet; it

To the Tune of "Yankee Doodle"

was just beyond—a place of dreams and vapors. Wasn't that dreadful woman ever going to leave? Hadn't she told her enough lies for one morning, or did they intend making her keep it up all day? She heard the groans of the old coach die away and the flutes start up again in the distance.

The harsh voice she dreaded was beginning a second time. "How old is your aunt now—the one I knew in Portland Square?" asked Lady Grumpers.

For a moment she was off her guard. She gazed into vacancy, and then she saw him by her side trying to attract her attention, as he stepped behind the curtain. "Sneeze," he whispered, and as she went through the farce, he crept nearer and in an undertone said, "Sixty-seven."

She repeated it aloud very slowly, as if dazed. He had saved her, and she felt like a drowning person restored to life.

Watkins, at the back of the hall, began ringing a breakfast-bell.

"Why did you do that?" she asked, drawing him to the window as the others arose with a great swish of garments. "I could have caught my tongue in time. I didn't need your help. I suppose you think me an impostor"—now she

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was very brave—"a thief, perhaps—or a puppet-show woman."

He laughed, his face clearing for the first time.

"I couldn't do less," he retorted. "I might have had to bring you to New York myself—if I had married you, Caroline of Cloudsley."



XIV

"I was Born a Gypsy, Sir"

THE Honorable Caroline ran down the steps of the Whitebush mansion, out into the throng which swirled about the "Beaux corner," heedless of the caps bobbing in windows across the way and the staring knights of idleness against the fences. "You must go now," Jeminy had said. "He has become dangerously friendly. Suppose, dear—suppose he should know the real Caroline."

The girl's eyes held a startling answer which made the other rail against fate. "I must lie here on my back while that jackanapes two doors away is ruining all our plans."

"He has not been informed of them," Rose had whispered, consolingly. "He can only put guesses together, and build up a little house of cards which I shall topple over the next time we meet."

Two hours had passed since breakfast, and she

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was free to revel in the sights and sounds of the metropolis; free to gratify the wander-lust bounding through her veins. The long line of Broadway was a medley of glare and bustle. Stage-coaches, carters' wagons, and goodly equipages driven by sedate negro coachmen dashed by. Hurrying shapes jostled her: belated shoppers returning from Buloid's or Geery's, the leading grocers; young bucks stopping to take cigars out of their castors—those fine Havanas sold six for a shilling at every shop of importance in the town; men of affairs and proud merchant princes strutting in the turkey-cock fashion of old Johnny Astor. Children smiled up into her face as they purchased sticks of taffy from the taffy-venders before old St. Paul's. Many years have passed since those quaint, winsome personages held their alluring baskets in the shadowy spaces before that sweet-scented, iron-spiked garden. It was said then that there was one of royal blood among them—"Tommy Charlie," the children called him. "Prince Charlie" was another of his pseudonyms. There was an air of gentle mystery about him like a ghost bewildered by the rush of daylight. Who remembers his story to-day, stowed away in some intangible nook of the lost town?

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Rose had but a glance for the passing show, however, for her mind was full of her visit to Dunlap. Jeminy had been sure she could get his address at the Park. There before her, over the rippling grass of the City Hall lawn, stood the theatre. She knew it by the bust of Shakespeare above the entrance. "Would she ever act there?" she asked herself. The children of Thespis were stretching out their hands to her. In the noise and glare there were other sounds and lights which she alone could hear and see. The heroes of the stage were luring her hither and thither, but always in their wake was a strong-limbed, dashing figure, a youth with laughing eyes and a mocking voice who compelled her to turn sometimes and look at him.

She ran lightly across the street and past the City Hall gates, gazing all the while at the theatre's stuccoed front, and the wooden steps painted gray and lined with black to imitate blocks of marble. It was not the old Park her mother knew, and yet it was a child of that once brilliant playhouse, and she revered it accordingly.

There a little, blue-gowned figure came each night to dazzle the town. She was dressed in

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blue in the miniature, and that was the way Rose always pictured her. "Happy mother to have been one of the *splendid* gypsies," she told herself. Happy until the shadow of the Whitebush house fell across her pathway. She remembered Jeminy's tales of how her father used to come on the nights "the Darling of the Park" played Miss Hardcastle, then growing more enamoured, thrice a week, and finally every time Sallie took the boards he was to be seen in a stage box or up in the dark whispering-gallery where one could obtain such a fine view.

A momentary feeling of bitterness swayed her. She would not make the same mistake. No love should drag her from her career! She had risked everything for it. Ah, what a gypsy she would be—a happy, care-free, gypsy! She thrilled, as she always did, at the thought of the whole world viewing her on that self-raised pedestal. All Amboy, Jepson Barker, the Whitebushes—even her father should see and applaud. And this time she unconsciously added one other face to the wondering throng.

There was the door—her door of paradise—which opened for the countless thousands. All the long days of patient toil were for this. All the hours with stolen play-books under the

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Terrill eaves. The comedy of Courtlandt Street itself! What did it matter if she never returned to that Whitebush dinner? The possibility that he had told Lady Grumpers what he suspected could not move her. One turn of the knob, and lo, the kingdom of gypsydom—the kingdom of her dreams!

Many a passer-by who saw her hesitating by that door in the summer sunshine paused for a second look at the fair sight. Once in the wide foyer where Gotham loved to promenade between the acts and show itself indifferent to comic songs and the pirouetting of the dancers, before bewildering, sinuous Garcia changed the fashion, Rose paused.

A dapper, smirking fellow was coming towards her. "The side door for the Clarke Company," he said. "People in the business never use this entrance."

"I'm not one—not an actress yet," she answered, shrinking from the word business. Then she grew red and faltered before his pronounced stare. "I want to find Mr. Dunlap, once the manager of this theatre. Does he live near Broadway?"

"That's good," he laughed. "Does he live near Broadway? Why, he lives *on* it. From

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Jotham Smith's elegant emporium to the Battery, that's his home. You'll find all the profesh in the same district, walking or riding, with bags of chink or without a copper." He slapped his thigh to show that his pocket could make a jingle.

"Vulgar fellow," the girl thought, and she raised her head higher to impress him, but for the moment he seemed engrossed in his glossy boots.

Suddenly he touched her ungloved hand and she shrank back. "Well," he said, feeling her revulsion, "I wanted to do you a good turn, miss. Look yonder through that glass door and you'll see your gentleman!"

They were both in the enclosed ticket-room gazing into the pit. The place was in semi-darkness, broken by a row of starlike, sputtering lights in the distance. "There he is—that old codger. Clarke's tragedians are rehearsing 'All's Well that Ends Well' for the road. Foolhardy, dem foolhardy, I say. Shakey don't draw nowadays; the public wants the new-fangled dramas." He was trying to impress her with his man-about-town air.

"Is that Mr. Dunlap?" she whispered, half to herself, paying no heed to his chatter. She

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could scarcely credit it. That fragile, sparsely built figure drooping over the seat-board, her mother's Dunny. Where was his mantle of greatness gone, and the air which had held the most exuberant spirits of the old American comedians in check?

A candle flared and she caught sight of his dusty queue. Some frills of snuff-colored Flanders caressed his smooth chin and added a note of singularity to his costume—a touch of frayed-out youth which was not his.

"Can't keep away," said the voice by her side. "Always here, winter and summer. What he doesn't know about acting isn't worth knowing. The times is changed since the yellow fever ruined the theatre and gave him the slingo. A bit seedy, ain't he?"

The flashy youth held the door back for her, but she forgot to thank him. The blackness was bewildering at first. It spread about her, full of faded presences—a hush that seemed alive. The tiers of boxes were vaults, and the sunken space for the orchestra a dusty crypt. On the dimly lighted stage a prompter bawled to a group of men and women in every-day costumes.

Dunlap had not seen her come in, and she crept

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over to him very softly, pausing before each foot-step. The rustle of her skirts made him turn. He looked to his right and did not speak, and then he bent in the other direction and she saw one eye was blind.

"Who are you?" he asked, peering closer, his ebony stick falling to the ground with a thud.

"I'm here in York to see you, Mr. Dunlap, to ask your help." After all, he had some of the old manner Jeminy knew. He was an eagle yet, wounded, perhaps, but still able to pipe a war-note.

"'Miss in her Teens,' and wild to storm the town. I know," he continued, watching the shadow on her face. "Tom Moore's sister, the Duff, has lured you to it. You want to strut over there in a fine silken gown and have all the pretty young gentlemen you can picture weep when you die in the last act. There are hundreds like you. I've met a few in my time, miss. A hundred dozen or so—"

This was Dunlap of the old Park with a vengeance, and though she was glad that he still lived, she felt a touch of indignation. He took her for a mere stage-dazed girl.

"I've never seen Mrs. Duff," she said, hotly. "I've never gazed upon a great actress—only such poor strollers as might come to Amboy."

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"Perth Amboy?" he queried, struck by the name.

"The Earl of Perth's town, if you like—the home of the true blue-bloods. There I've lived most of my life, hoping for these very minutes." Roguish lights were dancing in her eyes, and she bent her head towards him coquettishly.

"I've prayed for them," she continued, "toiled for them, *lied* for them. I was born a gypsy, sir, and do not have to be made one."

She threw off her gauze shawl, but he never shifted his position a hair's-breadth, only the lines of his face twitched a moment. "Don't you know me?" she cried, impulsively, moved by something in his expression. "Can't you remember one whom you made a great actress—one 'twas said you took pride in—one who was borne away?"

The stars along the stage front grew fainter. He was walking hand-in-hand with tender memories, and her pleading eyes were his beacon-lights.

"You're the spirit of Sallie Lowe," he said, brokenly. "You're Sallie's child! Yes, little girl," bowing a trifle and letting his stick make half an obeisance. "I knew you at first—I wanted to try you. You are the very shadow and breath of her."

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"Will I ever make one of *your* great gypsies?" she whispered. It seemed as if her whole world hung on his answer.

"You're the daughter of the Darling of the old Park," he answered, proudly, and in his first smile she read the heart of the man.

XV

The Father of the American Stage

THE clown was ending his speech to fair Helen.

"One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly! the other, that she's in earth, from whence God send her quickly!"

There was a clash of jingling bells as his cap hit the countess on the back.

"We've nibbled on Shakespeare all the morn, and now we'll gobble Bacon," he interpolated.

A laugh over the hackneyed witticism was wafted back from the retreating players in the wings.

Again the voice of Rose filled the dark pit and broke in upon the old man's thoughts. He seemed to be pondering as he gazed at her. Yes, there was fire under those smooth white brows. All the octave of emotions from joy to rage. The creature was palpitating with life and youth. A wonder-essence which shone from her hair, sparkled in her eyes, and escaped

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from her soul—something alluring and magnetic that bewitched.

"And you remember Jemima Diddle?" she asked.

"Of course I do. She was your mother's dresser, and a good one, but wild to show herself before the footlights. Her face wasn't quite her fortune," he laughed.

"She has been everything to me," she answered, proudly. Then her eyes began to twinkle and her voice grow more seductive. "She's playing second lead now."

"Well, well! Where?" he exclaimed.

"At Whitebushes'."

"I've never heard of that theatre."

"Of course not," silently giving way to her mirth. "It's just up, and last night was the first night people of flesh and blood ever ventured to play there. The walls and foundation may give way at any minute—that's the risk. La, sir, 'tis in the dismalest district at the end of the Fly Market! Courtlandt Street they call it."

He opened a worn snuffbox and took a pinch. "Whitebush? It sounds familiar."

She held her breath, forcing back the smile.

"Why," he cried, "'twas a Whitebush woman who had Oliver, the Nassau Street barber, ejected

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from the Greek ball given on the anniversary of the battle of New Orleans in this very spot last January. All the town talked of it. She was an exclusive vixen!"

"The same one who owns the theatre," she answered, laughing joyously.

His right hand, poising the snuffbox, fell to his side. A perplexed look crossed his face, followed by the sunshine of remembrance. "Your own name," he said, bowing. "Sallie Lowe's husband was a Whitebush—we *hated* that name once."

"Keep on hating it," she whispered. There was a touch of bitterness in her voice as she drew closer to him.

"We're stopping with the Courtlandt Street Whitebushes under assumed names—cousins from England. There was no other way to lodge in town. My father is very poor—you know his family never forgave him for marrying my mother, and he has grown embittered over it and loathes the stage. We escaped—Jem and I," she continued, theatrically—"escaped from care, the sneers always meted out to gypsies, a villain, and an empty purse—rode away in a gilded coach a trifle the worse for age—like people in a fairy tale."

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Now he interrupted her.

"Thank your hardships, little girl, they have made you what you are."

To her cheeks the roses had come again, and her eyes were dewed and soft.

"If," he whispered to himself, half sadly. "If"—only one little word.

"You *will* help me," she pleaded. "I must get on soon. The comedy in Courtlandt Street comes to an early end. Perhaps the curtain is falling at this very moment. Jeminy is not used to a Lady Townley rôle, and in her illness may go too far. Oh, you will help me!" she repeated, again, for he stood so strangely silent. "Jeminy has always told me what a great man you are in York—have written many plays—painted noble pictures—given to the world fine books. Why, I see the bay-leaves twined about your head." She no longer felt the least fear of him, and a note of pity had crept into her voice.

He drew away and looked at her. "The mighty have fallen," he said, slowly; "old friends, old scenes, old triumphs—all vanished. You've heard of the wheel of fortune? It never forgets to turn, little girl."

The actors were coming back. A jumping,

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shouting, merry crew, making the stage creak with their antics.

"The *Cadmus* ain't sighted yet," one of them called. "My lord marquis may be visiting Jonah. The street-criers say he'll not reach port till Sunday. Glad Clarke's don't open here to-night. The town's got twirly-whirly heads, by jingo!"

"You feel the loneliness?" She paid no heed to the voices, and for the moment forgot her own disappointment.

"I never do," he answered, with his eyes on the stage.

"They're company," she said, misunderstanding him.

His laugh was very low and died away into a cadence, mockingly sad.

"When I stand here, child, gazing at these people of a new school mouthing Avon's bard, and throwing out fish-hooks to the immortals, I only appear to be watching their antics. It's the glow of the lights and the tinsel that I need to bring back old times and voices. To-day I was thinking of your mother. That's why you startled me so. Yes, I kept it from you. Ah, you're amazingly like her. The same music in your voice, the same low tones with a sigh in

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them. She could always find the hearts of any audience. I remember her reciting an epilogue on a benefit night close by the front—not in the tragic manner Mrs. Hallam always used, but daintily, with a hundred birdlike gestures:

“‘And soon, alas, we, too, like shadows go,
But don't forget me—just your Sally Lowe.’

“‘We won't,’ the gallery roared—she always had the gallery. By the tongue of the dragon Ladon, I swear your mother was a great actress! Perhaps it is as well she left us when she did—while the public still clamored for her. We must all remember the newer generations surging ever onward to the high places and eager to grasp our few poor laurels. Take them while they are fresh and go—then they're yours to cherish. Keep them until they're withered, and they are either taken away or fall from you.”

“I long to gather some,” she interrupted, impetuously.

“If the New Park were my theatre you should. Mr. Beekman wanted me to have it, but he was only half-owner, and others thought I had outlived my usefulness.”

“Oh no,” she sighed.

“It is a dismal thing to be an old man.”

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A shadow crossed her face. There was nothing to say that would comfort him. Her own plans were slipping away—vanishing behind the rocks on the misty road to Castle To-Morrow. She would have to return to Amboy and—Jepson Barker.

Two boys passed them with tapers to light the oil-lamps in the chandeliers. There was a faint pitter-patter of footsteps in the foyer. Dunlap bent forward and peered through the pit door. "Keep still," he said. "Stand as you are; the pose is superb. Simpson is evidently coming through to show friends Evers's new drop-curtain. He's bound to look this way—and if I can introduce you as Sallie Lowe's daughter 'twill be playing a trump card."

She had taken a flower from her belt, and was pulling the petals from it in an absent fashion. Her bonnet, still clinging to the back of her head by its ribbons, displayed her flashing hair in enchanting disarrangement.

The door creaked, letting in a confused babble of voices.

"There's De Luce, the leader of the orchestra," he whispered, "Mr. Platt, and the Wheatley. Jemima Diddle may have told you of her. Fine woman, fresh and strong as apple-blossoms in

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May - time. They've halted and are noticing you."

Rose stood very still, with half a smile on her sweet, red lips, but totally unconscious of her skillfully arranged attitude. She possessed that wonderful gift of merging her own personality into the character she was assuming. "Another fling at fate," she thought. Aloud she said: "Don't forget that I'm Caroline Whitebush. I'm an Honorable also, though you needn't tell them that."

A pronounced rustle of silk filled the theatre, making an accompaniment to the medley of voices. Mrs. Wheatley was wearing a cholera-gown—one of those huge-sleeved and beruffled skirted affairs designed to hide the ravages of that dread disease. Her bodice was profusely garnitured with paste brooches, and the men about her seemed to have caught some of the glitter that radiated from her sparkling trappings.

"Go away, young man," she was saying to a high-spirited youth who had seized her iridescent mite of a fan. "You don't know how to flirt a fan. I'm so hot, too—I've most run my legs off for the friend of Washington."

"I can fan a flirt," returned the youth, gayly.

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"I can keep the flies"—indicating Simpson and the others with his cane—"away from the sugar-plum. Hear me, divine creature, I make my vows—my ardent vows—in the most damning spot of all the town—surely the pit is that. Be mine. Be Harry's little ducky, and repair to the sylvan solitudes of Greenwich village."

"My Harry—and he has known me—let me see—how many days? Dear boy, I've heard you've had your first vote, and if you must make love I've a daughter at home who would dote on a Charleston gentleman—the nursery is the place where sugar is surest of acceptance."

"That's Harry Placide," said Dunlap. "He's going to be a candle-dimmer—happy dog."

Rose moved a step nearer the railing, and Simpson, who had been eying her, dropped his glass. "She can't belong to Clarke," he was thinking. "My, what an air!" He was condescending to speak to the old hanger-on with her when Mrs. Wheatley anticipated him. Catching sight of her former manager for the first time, she hurried out of the box down into the pit, heedless of the jovial Harry's reproaches.

"Dunny, you darling," she cried, "kiss your Wheatley. I haven't seen you since we closed on July 5th. Such rackety days we've had on

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Schooley's Mountain, and you've been to Washington. How's Mr. President Monroe?" she asked, cajolingly. "Does he want you to get me away from Simpson for the Capital?" The men were coming nearer, and Mrs. Wheatley's voice bubbled over into music. "Simpson's a devil"—looking back over her shoulder. "Yes, Simpy, I'm telling Mr. Dunlap that you neglected to buy me the new golden velvet for Ellen Rosenberg. He wouldn't have treated me so fiendish cruel; would you, dear? Ah!" she lisped, pretending to become suddenly aware of Rose, although she had cast many furtive glances in her direction. "One of us, I hope?"

The gentlemen were now within ear-shot. "Whom have we here?" she continued, smiling. "Who is your lovely friend?"

"She's a young lady seeking a part," Dunlap answered, returning the bows of the group. "Her mother was a credit to our noble profession. You knew her, Mrs. Wheatley—knew her, and loved her, I may say. You saw her in the past, Mr. Simpson. I'm sure there's not a votary of the muses present who is not familiar with her name. Let me have the honor of presenting to you all the daughter—the only daughter of the renowned Sallie Lowe."

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There was a momentary silence, broken by the noises in the wings and the distant street sounds. "Great Heavens!" Mrs. Wheatley gasped. "Support me, Harry, with your arm. I never knew she had a child. Little Sallie's child!" Tears filled her eyes as she moved excitedly towards Rose. "I loved your mother, dear," she said, very tenderly, dropping for a moment all her artificial manner.

Rose rested in the other's embrace. If Jeminy could only see her now!

Dunlap shook his head in approval. "I feel she is worthy of the Park," he stammered.

"She cannot fail to be, with such a heritage. Why, a wit of my day"—glancing roguishly at her youthful cavalier—"once said Sallie could enchant an audience in a cheese-cloth tunic making love to a broomstick."

Simpson had been eying the girl as if she were some sprightly animal at a county fair. "You honor me," he spurted, bowing half-derisively to the elder manager. "I observed you dubbed the theatre the Park, instead of the New Park. I am ready to grant that the young person has quite all the outward marks of genius. If I had known of her at an earlier period I might have given her a chance in the first play."

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"Her name would be a gilt-edged card for you," urged the actress. "September's such a dullard month. The houses are always monstrous stupid—snoring over one's best lines. I think, Simpy, you should pay us double then or hire a clique to wake 'em up. Do take her," she urged, importunately, in his ear.

"Where shall I find you?" he asked, speaking to Rose directly.

"Well, I like that!" whispered Mr. Placide to his charmer. "He's actually swooping her off before we even know her name."

The girl heard them both. She would tell the truth, come what might. It was a comedy—this rôle she was playing, and a comedy it should remain to the bitter end. Castle To-Morrow was lost, perhaps forever, and darkness was closing in on the road. She realized with a throbbing pain in her head that she had overstayed her time in the theatre. The White-bushes would be seeking her soon.

"I thank you, sir," she said, aloud, bowing very low to Simpson; "and you, dear friend of my mother's. I thank every one of you." Jeminy, apt pupil of Dunlap, had told her the value of dramatic effect, and he should have it now.

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They were all gazing at her intently, and she saw the old man by her side begin to thump his ebony stick nervously.

"I am Rose Whitebush, and I live at the Whitebush house on Courtlandt Street, five doors from the street called Broadway—and if by chance you clang the knocker there, ask for the Honorable Caroline Whitebush. Oh, I want to be one of you!" she cried, stretching out her arms longingly as she swept past them. "And come soon—soon—or you will not find me."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Simpson. "A new way to seek a part!"

The others were craning their necks at the retreating figure.

"Gentlemen," called Mrs. Wheatley, making everybody turn suddenly. "You brought me here to see a curtain—not a play."

XVI

Love Laughs through Flimsy Plots

THE sun came out from behind a cloud and lit up those isles of radiant-hued peonies in the City Hall park, planted by the industrious gentlewomen of Gotham.

Rose was gazing at them when she espied him. He was seated on a bench facing the theatre entrance in an attitude of expectancy, but for the moment his eyes were intent on a pantaletted miss working a sampler under the direction of a nurse-maid. Then he looked away and caught her gaze, while a flush that matched the brightest of the peonies tinged his cheeks.

Her first impulse was not to recognize him.

"Please stop," he said, advancing and bowing.

She was hurrying past him, her head erect and defiant.

"Just a word or two," he called again.

The creature was very handsome.

"One little word."

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"No," she answered, pausing.

He was beside her in all the proud insolence of garnet broadcloth. His blue stock matched his eyes and she mentally called him fop. Then she admired the easy swing of his muscular arms.

"You followed me here?" she demanded.

"Would a man do less?" he laughed.

"You came to spy—to drag my poor secrets from me, if you could! Did Lady Grumpers employ you, or my relatives, the Whitebushes?"

"Ah," he said, "before breakfast you—"

"Yes, I know," cutting him short. "I owe you a pinch of snuff."

They simultaneously thought of the sneeze and caught each other's smiles.

"You did well," he commended, using his surest weapon first.

"Did I?" she asked, entrapped for the moment.

She was bewitching in that shy, alluring mood, and his heart began to beat faster. They were alone in a field of peonies. He had one skein of her mystery, and yet he knew that he dared not unravel it. As he gazed into her eyes, which were dreaming of that scene in the theatre, a wild longing to help her came to him, and in his next question he forgot himself.

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"Will you let me be of use to you? For three hours I have planned to say this as I sat here pondering—three whole hours," he repeated, obtaining no perceptible reply.

Her face had clouded again. "I do not know you, sir," she said, proudly. "In London, women of my position never accept the services of gentlemen who are—well—slight acquaintances."

"But they do—in London." The minx, he thought; as if she didn't know that he knew some of the things she knew. "Why, I've really heard of you for nigh a score of years," he said.

It was her turn to start. He saw his advantage and pressed it.

"My governess told me of your Flanders crib at Cloudsley when I was only two. Later I learned you fell out of it and broke your front teeth. At five my tutor—the governess had departed the way of all governesses—informed me that you were recovering from the small-pox—only slightly marked. You've changed since then!" drawing out an adorably glad sigh.

"And after that you saw me on the Amboy road," she said, trying to flank him.

"Oh no—at the Duchess of Richmond's ball.

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You were wearing white and purple, and I noticed that you had the Didear nose."

She pouted deliciously.

"Aren't you glad you didn't marry me?" he questioned, a sly tinge of malice in his voice as he grew surer of himself. "Just think of what you've escaped!"

"I don't know." It was his turn to stare. "I've had so few offers—the men have all been aged and eligible."

She would not recognize the existence of another Caroline, he was certain of that.

They had come to a bend in the path. "Poor Caroline; I wonder if she loved him?" she was thinking. "Will she ever tell me anything?" he asked himself. "Can I go on like this and successfully baffle Lady Grumpers's cannonading?" She was certainly the most amusing bit of femininity he had ever met with. He would put her in a book—but why wouldn't she trust him, though? After all, did he really want her to? A puff of wind blew her saucy curls and showed him one little, shell-like ear.

In a minute they would be leaving their half-sylvan retreat to step out into Broadway riotous with multicolored bunting and fluttering flags. For the hour there was a lull in the Lafayette

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fever. The urchins in Pie Woman's Lane by the Park were silent. Most of the ardent enthusiasts had decamped for Elds corner or farther down Battery Place to the very ramparts of Castle Clinton. He caught the pensive outline of her face and again decided to make another trial.

"This New York theatre is a fine building," he said, looking back. "I suppose it is the offspring of that Theatre Royal my great-uncle Grumpers and his friend André acted in during the troublous seventies."

She answered him with a smile so perilously sweet that it seemed to hint of tears.

"A noble profession," he asserted, eagerly, calling himself a scoundrel for trying to entrap her.

"The noblest in the world."

"For men," he added, wishing that he had not spoken first.

He was beginning to believe that she was an actress, and the thought hurt him. For all he knew she might be going to perform in the playhouse beyond the elms. The same questions that had troubled him earlier in the morning came again with malevolent persistency and battled with her sweet witcheries. Was he a

Love Laughs through Flimsy Plots

poor dupe-head to be fooled by a clever jade? Then his feelings underwent a second revolution. Her joyous, gleeful youth spoke to him and pointed out the serene plains above the realm of logic and sane reasoning. There was something he divined in her that sang itself into his innermost being—no other woman in the same situation could have made him feel that way, he knew. Whatever she was, he adored her. He must save her from that life of hardship. She seemed to be hurrying past him shrouded in a veil which he could not tear away. The roses faintly touched her cheeks now, and her eyes held the first shy lights of early blossoming stars, but some day, oh, God, what would she be when that glittering life had vanished! For a moment he saw the army of weary, carmine-painted women doomed ever to follow behind the cart of Thespis.

"The footlights often burn one of your sex," he said, putting some of his intense feeling into the speech.

Those were Jeminy's words—her mother's words. She paused, hesitatingly, with one foot on the Broadway step, and looked back over the sweep of riotous color. He had touched her arm very gently to help her.

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"There are other fires in the world," she repeated, slowly—"other fires that burn women. Don't imagine that I cannot feel all you are pondering over. My own mother felt that way. But," she continued, "you can't make the north wind grow a garden of roses. Its blasts can kill the roses. Why do I speak to you like this?" she asked. "You are nothing to me. Why do I give you a peep into my heart, sir, when all life is just pretend?"

"And forfeits," he said, half sadly.

"Perhaps I'm a babe in the wood. It's not dark yet," she laughed, with a look subtly arch—he had attempted to draw nearer. "When the night comes on and the wolves howl I may call you."

"I came to your rescue before breakfast."

"But I didn't need you."

"You will to-night."

"Why to-night?" she said, fearlessly.

"When the caps get after you—those terrible embattlements that would frighten a grenadier."

"They're my relatives' caps," she admonished.

"What grown-up airs!"

Rose made a little grimace.

"You couldn't be thirty, you know," he con-

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tinued, "although I can almost believe you're twenty. When you smile—just as you're doing now—you go straight back to sixteen. Frowns make you eighteen or so—a haughty toast of the season refusing to trip a measure of the Sir Roger with her hair-dresser."

"Do you put yourself in that position for me?" she inquired, lightly, not at all angry with him.

"I would for one little curl," he sighed.

"Insolent," she said, aloud, and yet all the while she was comparing him to one other man who had tried to win her favor. This handsome youth had such a virile yet tender way, sure to pierce through the strongest citadels a woman could erect. How bold and brave he looked! And each time he addressed her she felt tempted to throw herself on his kindness or go down on her knees and denounce herself. What would he say to her if—? No, the game was becoming too exciting.

"I know you are a dream-lady," he said, impulsively, seizing her hand. "There's a fragrance of old-fashioned flowers about you. I'm sure you lived in a land of tall, white lilies and red, red roses. They've told you all their secrets—secrets of the sunshine. Its dazzle is all over you—in your eyes, on your hair, and often-

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est it flashes in your words. Who are you?" he demanded, passionately, as she drew back from him.

For a moment her eyes rested longingly on his face and her lips were pursed for speech. The look of unrestrained liveliness was gone, and one clinched hand beat against the pink waves of her full-skirted gown in a vain endeavor for self-mastery. Across their path a shadowy side street delved away to the water-front. There ascended the glowing banners of Neptune, and, beyond, the long, cool stretches of Jersey forest climbing upward into the very rim of heaven. Amboy was there—dear, old, sleeping city. After all, she loved the place. He made her see the Terrill garden again. The bees were droning in the box, the hollyhocks crept off to the green like watchful sentinels. They were waiting for her. In the attic was the empty Park Theatre trunk—somehow the thing assumed an almost human guise in her imagination and smiled at her half sadly. The road to fame wasn't such easy climbing. Yes, his shoulder would be a pleasant place for a tired head. Tears came into her eyes, but she turned from him almost haughtily. "Pluck up," came Jeminy's words. "The comedy isn't over yet. There is still Castle To-Morrow."

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"Suppose I tell you I am a thief—a vagabond. This morning you almost believed me."

"You could only steal—" He pointed to his left side.

They had turned into Courtlandt Street, and were standing before the ancient link-posts of the Grumpers house. Above, by the window of the first chamber, stood her ladyship, and as Cecil Marlton looked up he saw her. Rose, gazing only at the Whitebush domicile, perceived the stately Jane behind the geraniums.

"Please drop my hand," she said, nervously, "and don't accompany me to the Whitebush door. Oh, I'm afraid to go in! Feel me tremble—like an aspen-leaf." She gave him the hand again. "It's late—and there's Cousin Jonathan—let me go—perhaps I am the dream-lady to live but an hour or two longer—then float away like the thistle's floss."

There was a new light in his eyes as she ran away from him down the street.



XVII

Courtlandt Street Agog

"THEY'RE at it again!" Ora Davenport sank or rather fluttered to the settee beside Jane and gave a lady-like gasp which was half a scream. The two women were hidden behind the breastwork of geraniums fronting the south side of Courtlandt Street.

"It's Sukey," said Jane. "Look at her now. Why, her cap's a regular dancing calla-lily. How can she manage her feet?"

"Manage them! Those women could do anything to satisfy their curiosity. By pumping Watkins, who is friendly with their one servant, I have gleaned that they know so much about their lodger, Mr. Dimper, he is afraid to leave. I'd hazard it she's wearing those new-fangled galoshes now. They'd help her to bounce up and down."

"Oh, look yonder!" Miss Ora raised her slender arm to the Bimbleton school, where a

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row of young ladies were half out of the windows clutching the huge flag Mrs. Bimbleton thought necessary to display for Lafayette, owing to her late intimacy with the Washingtons.

"It must be the Grumpers house. Yes, there's Caroline—and she's with—"

"Don't keep me waiting. You know my nerves won't stand it. Is the man—Jonathan?"

"No; Mr. Marlton—but," continued Ora, glad of what appeared a suitable opportunity for speaking of a subject uppermost in her thoughts, "Jonathan admires her very much—so much, I think he's kissed her four times since she's been in the house."

"How indelicate of you, Ora Davenport! He can't marry her, if that's what you want to find out. In our branch of the family men do not marry their own flesh and blood, Gaby! Your side—well, you must know about that!"

"You're cruel," sighed Ora. "I feel I'd better be journeying back to the Manor House soon. My room may be needed for your foreign guests."

Jane did not pay the least heed to her cousin's thrust, but kept her head turned resolutely to the patch of scarlet flower. She was wondering why the girl had paused before the Grumpers house. Was her ladyship so daft about the quality that

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she must talk to them from a chamber window—a performance more suited to the south side of the street? That Marlton was a young man of parts. Were his eyes the color of Sir Samuel's? She could have told he was his kinsman anywhere. "If he writes a book about this city," she mused, "I hope he will be careful what he says about us. I wouldn't want Caroline's family to receive any erroneous impressions. What a way the girl has!" As she looked at her she admired the poise of her head-gear. Now a dimpling face bent towards the Whitebushes. Ah—a knock sounded in one of the long, shut-up chambers of Jane Whitebush's memory. Who had once looked at her like that? From out what buried year was that ghost of a smile haunting her? She closed her eyes, vainly trying to remember. When she peered again a crowd of busybodies shut away the girl from her view. The servants tiptoeing into the room brought the welcome idea of lunch—and, besides, it seemed an auspicious time to admonish them.

"Girls," she said, severely, to Watkins and her two assistants, "this morning at breakfast you did nothing but gape at our honorable relative. This stain from the sweet cicely in the chicken sauce came from your careless hands, Watkins."

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She seized a fold of her rich, shimmering silk and looked up severely. "What!" she continued, staring at the woman's wool and scarce heeding her mumbled apologies. "If you're not wearing frizettes! How dare you, miss! How dare you take such a liberty in this house!"

"Please, ma'am, I heard her say 'twas the go."

"What! Has the company demoralized you, too? Is my own domicile tumbling about my head?"

A wave of laughter swept over the balusters. "Heaven knows what Ora and Marie are learning from that Wildairs woman," she muttered. Out loud she called for Thomas and bade her maids begone to the kitchen, the proper place for such baggages.

"Boy," she said, gazing at the black yokel in the doorway, "to - night you shall serve at table."

"Yes, missus."

"Stand still and take your hands out of your pockets."

"Yes, missus."

"Ask Watkins to get you Mr. Jonathan's old blue coat—the one we were going to give to the lamplighter. Mind you take care of it, and wash

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your hands before you put it on. And when you're wearing the coat of a gentleman of importance, try your best to appear like him."

Miss Whitebush turned to her window and gazed superciliously at the south side. One of the Bitmush girls was looking over and she assumed a very elegant attitude for her benefit. "To-morrow the whole town will see us," was her pleasing reflection. "We can occupy our pew in St. Paul's for morning service." All the Whitebushes were proud of their pew, which was only three behind the governor's. "In the afternoon we will go to Grace Church to hear Ellen Gillingham sing." Mrs. Delancey had said Courtlandt Street was given over to mantua-makers and milliners, and it would be just as well to show her that one of its families at least still attracted people of title visiting the city. In the evening there was the new St. John's. She wished Lady Grumpers would accompany them there, but her ladyship always shut her blinds and played whist on Sunday nights. "Sir Samuel was different," Jane sighed. His wife hadn't any of the true religious spirit.

The laughter was growing louder. Jane turned uneasily, breaking off a dead leaf from one of the geraniums in the window-box. She wanted to

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hear what was being said, and yet she did not feel easy when with Miss Wildairs. Curiosity finally overcame her reluctance, and, with a final toss of her head at the street for the benefit of Mrs. Bimbleton, who was just stepping out of her garden, followed by a trail of young ladies eager for Broadway air, she bounded to her feet.

Thomas, in his new garments, met her in the doorway.

"What have you done to yourself?" she asked, scanning him rapidly.

"You tells me to look like massa, and I puts a pillow a here," he smirked, unbuttoning his waistcoat.

"Oh, Thomas, dolthead, take it out at once."

When his portly figure suddenly shrank and grew loose-jointed, she gazed at him with greater dismay.

Her guests would know that it wasn't his livery; after all, it was no worse than stiffening cravats with a pudding of wool.

"Put it back," she said, severely, as she mounted the stairs, "and be sure you fasten every button in its hole."

As she reached the landing, Rose sounded the knocker. Jonathan was coming up the street, and the girl hoped the door would open before

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he saw her. She felt that she could not talk to him. Her philosophy to be happy for the moment was dashed away. The Park seemed as distant as Amboy. Oh, why had she ever come to Courtlandt Street?—it was no place for a fragile little comedy! Standing there, half shrinking into the entry, her eyes filled with perplexed tears. And yet creeping into her tremulous heart there was the first note of some elusive but wonderful harmony.

"Not one glimpse of him," called the dapper figure below her, cheerily.

"Whom?" she asked, flushing.

"Why, the hero, of course. The buglers who were to proclaim his arrival at each street corner have gone to their homes. I just met Johnny Rutgers lagging back to the counting-house—he was quite vaporish over the loss of a holiday. 'Drat the Frenchman, isn't he ever going to arrive?' says he." Jonathan gave a deep, mirthful chuckle.

"The city is so beautiful now with the flags. There must be thousands of them. I hope he will come soon."

"Why didn't he bring you to the gate?" asked Jane, from the landing.

For a moment Rose was taken aback. The

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woman certainly was argus-eyed. She had seen her with Cecil Marlton. Then she recovered herself. "At home they never do," she laughed.

Miss Whitebush scrutinized her brother, glad for once that he was an American.

The girl crept up the stairs. In a minute or two the expression of assumed gayety left her features and gave place to a look, sweeter, shyer, and more sad. She had wronged him again and this time the wound hurt her. Cecil! The name was like some ever-blooming thing—always in her mind. Had she dreamed of a Cecil before she met him? or was there such a character in one of her mother's play-books? As she moved away from the most feared of all her relatives into the dark chamber passage, a strange presentiment of foreboding evil seized her. The woman was standing still and gazing at her, she knew. What would Jeminy say to her dire news? Was there any answer? Each hooped shepherdess on the dim, French-papered walls seemed to watch her with Jepson Barker's phantasmal eyes. She paused, breathlessly, catching the drift of voices.

"Yes," Jeminy in her rôle of Miss Wildairs was saying, "I'm glad that our coming here is bringing you into such prominence. You fear the

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Bitmushes may mount their roof to watch us at better advantage. Lor', my dear Miss Ora, Caroline doesn't care—she's been stared at for years." ("That's no lie," said Jeminy, under her breath.) "Yes, even plain, inoffensive me am accustomed to a certain amount of consideration from the public." She raised her head, assuming her Sneerwell manner practised with such good results on Jersey Sabbaths.

"Why, girls," she cackled, making both the ladies indulge in half-pleased, embarrassed giggles. "In London you'd be a sensation—as much of a seven days' wonder, I believe, as we are here." She ducked her head behind a pillow to hide her mirth.

"I'd like to go," said Ora. "Jane was—very rude to me this morning."

"I would," continued Miss Wildairs. "On my own hook I invite you to Cloudsley. Faith, you'll meet with a warm reception there!"

"Am I enough of a woman of fashion?" she asked, tremulously. "I seem to be so different from you."

"Of course you are. Why, you remind me of the Farren herself who played half a hundred fashionable parts."

"Played parts! An actress! Oh, dear!"



"THE GIRL PERMITTED THEM TO HELP HER TO THE BED"

Courtlandt Street Agog

Jeminy inwardly cursed her tongue, always straying into that forbidden path.

"Hush!" said Marie, advancing. "Don't let the others hear. My brother—the one we never speak of—married a player-woman. It hastened my father's death—he never would look upon her—vowed she was no better than a woman of the streets."

A stifled cry from Rose cut short her words. The girl, half reeling, staggered into the room. Her face looked old and pitifully white in the broad sunlight. That first moment of amazement swept away all the faithful theatre-dresser's wrath. What was the child going to do—strike the women? She saw the terrible struggle for self-control going on behind the knit brows, and her heart beat to the other's anguish. Another moment and they would be undone. She must save them. "Her foot!" she cried, seizing upon stage-play. "See, she's hurt it! Ah, go before she faints. Yes, get the *sal volatile* in the drawing-room."

The girl permitted them to help her to the bed from which Jeminy sprang, spreading out her soiled finery and letting the bedclothes billow to her feet. When the door closed, Rose sat bolt upright.

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"You heard what they called my mother?" she said, hoarsely. "My own little mother!"

"Sallie's child," whispered Jeminy, caressing her, "you almost gave them our secret."

"Outside that door I was wishing myself back in Amboy—up in the old powdering-closet with only the rats for company—but now I'll stay and fight—until this Whitebush theatre falls or they drag us off to Bridewell."



XVIII

While Julie Ann's Bell Tolled

FOR the moment Rose was tired of her fine-ladyship airs. With a sudden, birdlike motion—so like the child of the Terrill attic—she closed the drowsy old tome she had been trying to read and let it slip down her silken gown to the Turkey carpet. The dusk had come once more to Courtlandt Street. There were no stars to pierce through the curtains to-night. An ash-colored August haze united the north and south sides in a bond of transient friendliness, and for a few hours at least passing strangers would not be able to discover any difference between the Whitebush and Grumpers abodes and the homes of mere nobodies.

The girl in the drawing-room window-seat could not make out the high Bimbleton palings. Straggling armies of shadows kept moving before the pane, and there was the murmuring, almost rhythmic, patter of footsteps, otherwise she would

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have felt that the world was drifting away. Sometimes a lantern flashed and was gone, leaving the ambient blackness drearier than before. Stray puffs of a sleeping gale dashed out to sea, making onslaughts against the trumpet-vines and filling her with vague uneasiness—mingling with her wandering thoughts like a medley of notes—a few so enchantingly sweet they savored of unreality, others loud and almost fiendishly strident. She was dreaming of the morning again and her walk to St. Paul's with Cecil. After service they had found Lady Franklin's tomb in the chancel, and as she gazed at it he had asked the cause of her sadness—prompted by some sudden, intuitive instinct. There was no way of telling him. Every hour and minute she was doomed to play at cross-purposes. Oh, for a little breath of freedom! She was panting to be her true self, and sick of all sham, pretence, and aristocracy. Was it days or years since Adoniram Heard drove his weary coach down to the Paulus Hook ferry, followed by the hooting populace? Where was it now? The elements seemed to cry out the name of Barker! Did Jepson know her secret? There were his searching eyes again—peering out of the dark corners—looking in from the street. She covered her face

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with her hands, shutting them away. Then a soothing chime of bells ended it all.

When she uncovered her face there was one candle-light—brought by Watkins. Its welcome rays outlined the form of Jonathan on the low Dutch chair by the cheerless, empty grate. "Uncle Jonathan," she faltered, wistfully. Somehow calling him by his real name made her feel braver. She would give him her confidence, and he would help her to bear up and point the way out of the present difficulties.

There was no answer.

"He's asleep," she whispered to herself as she arose and tiptoed over to him. "Oh, why did he fall asleep? I wanted to tell him—I must tell him!"

The church bells in the distance tolled faintly. Overhead boards creaked. The sisters were doubtless nearly ready for evening service. She dwelt upon his words uttered in that first void after the others had left the room. "You have brought life into this dull pile of brick. . . . I wish you were going to stay. . . . I love you, dear. . . ."

The thing was being flung from the distant steeples—a part of the holy melody.

Then, on the surge of silence, the echo of Miss

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Marie's voice mocked her. "No better than a woman of the streets." Her own little mother! If she told, they would lay all the blame upon the actor blood. Jeminy had said so. There must be some way to leave these temporary boards—some right way. The comedy was becoming a terrible tangle, with meshes here and pitfalls there. She longed for the fierce joy of being loved, and found only an agonized remorse. All the old recklessness and defiance was changed into apprehension. The name of uncle came to her lips again but remained unborn. Cecil's eyes were imploring her to stop. It might mean separation—the end. And he was—she dared not even think the word.

"He would help you," the bell-notes whispered, slowly dying away.

She stood very still for a moment, as if making a final struggle with self before bending over and kissing him softly on the hair.

"Julie Ann's bell," he said, drowsily. "I suppose the street will be chained up if I don't hurry and don my Wellington boots—the ones with the yellow tassels."

"You're dreaming aloud," Rose said, softly, smoothing his coat. "Who was Julie Ann?"

He peered up at her, dazed, like one half

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awake and reluctant to let the dream go. "I thought she had come back to me."

She did not answer, watching him struggle to sit up. Once she believed she heard him sigh, and in some strange way it lessened her perplexity. A little later he sought for her hand, and the boyish smile she loved twitched faintly about his mouth. They were all alone but for the staring portraits of their ancestors, and her soft eyes led him on. Suddenly he gave a great "Hem!" and smiled again—an old bachelor's wishful smile which always seems to mean the same oft-repeated ditty when turned upon a pretty girl. "Young woman, lend me your ear. I've something on my mind I wish to impart and I feel awkward in approaching it. There, you minx, I'm just waiting to be drawn out."

Rose evidently anticipated him for she put her head close to his, letting her curls brush his face and the whole of her magnetic youth lay siege to his heart. And he, eager to review those sunny hours full of that gamesome lad he once was, pulled out his one faded rose of romance and grew garrulous over it.

"Sweet little Julie Ann!" he said. "She was a dancer at our theatre—the Park, you know—but every Sabbath day she sang in the choir of the

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famous Dr. John Rodgers's Wall Street Church. I remember it created some talk at the time and several of the women singers jealously declared she was given to jig-time. Her voice to me was the voice of an angel—the clearest, most liquid soprano I have ever heard. When she led the meeting there was no lining or explaining the hymns—even the most halting, bigoting air grew ecstatic. The shy young men forgot their quavering tenors as Julie Ann soared away higher and higher, and when she dropped down like a bird on wing a dozen pitch-pipes could not have eased the chorus of caterwauling which followed. That bell they took from the old church makes me think of her. I see a daintily clad figure up in the singing-gallery looking—

“At you,” whispered Rose. There was a new tremor in her voice—that soft note women use under the benign influence of a sad emotion.

“Yes, at me. Those were happy times. She always was careful not to offend the church-members by her appearance, although the pompous codger of a dominie had some of Whitefield's liberality and secretly commended his choir for putting the solemn words of Watts to that stout, racy tune, ‘Begone, dull care,’ and hurling the strange concoction at an army of

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belligerents. Yes, those were good old days!" He sat up and squared himself. "I generally escorted Ann home after meeting. She liked to be called Ann on Sabbath day. 'It's a pious, seventh-day name,' she used to say, 'and besides I'm a Julie all the week, tripping measures for the town.' And how she did dance! Such fire and vivacity! Pierre Gardel never gazed upon a lovelier Psyche in the many presentations of his wonderful ballet. Sometimes, on afternoons, I stole around to 15 Little Queen Street—Hullett's Academy—where she taught a class of misses the languid, pretentious gavotte, then so much in vogue owing to the partiality of the French queen. Poor little Julie Ann! Listen—the bell still chimes—"

"You loved her?" said the girl, faintly.

His answer was to bow his head while over his jocund, weather-beaten face stole a look of unconscious pain.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," she faltered, impetuously, seizing his hands.

"It would have killed my father if we had married. His first cub ran off with an actress—Sallie Lowe they called her. Gad! the pater was a proud old Tory. A fine, upright man—we never took after him. I gave her up for his sake, and

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she later met another young spark who wooed and won her." His eyes closed again. "Summers long ago," he sighed.

"You loved her?" she repeated, this time thinking only of herself. A well-spring of joy rose up in her heart driving before it all the dregs of mistrust, the tantalizing doubts. He had loved one of her mother's people—he wasn't a real Whitebush. He was human—a noble man in the truest sense of the word. She would tell him her secret—there on her knees beseech his forgiveness. For a moment she hesitated, peering at his closed eyes. Cecil seemed to be imploring her to ponder. The morning meant fresher courage. New fears sprang at her through the dusk, like a band of black imps. Her overwrought nerves clashed in a whirl of discord. Then the tears came—hot, scalding tears.

"Don't child," he said, now fully awake and gazing at her flurried and embarrassed.

"They're not all for her," she sobbed. "I've something—oh, sir, I've something to tell you."

There was a sudden noise on the stairs as if the ladies were descending.

"Trouble will keep—it's the never-leaving quest unless we're very brave."

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They separated by tacit consent.

Then he moved to her impulsively, kissing away the tears.

"Jonathan!" said Jane, peeping in from the hall, "I think it quite unnecessary that you should impress even chaste salutes on Caroline's face so—so often." Her manner was bristling with indignation.

"So do I," echoed Miss Ora, folding her hands over her Bible as she advanced.

The girl raised her head thankfully; the candle was sputtering out. In the doorway stood Cecil Marlton. "I bring Lady Grumpers's compliments," he said. "Her ladyship longs to accompany you, but she fears the devastating effects of the inclement weather."

"Her complexion?" asked Marie, maliciously.

"She should fear Satan more!" roared the eldest Miss Whitebush.

Cecil glanced at Rose, who refused to smile.

"And you?" said Marie.

"Oh, I—I stay here with Miss Caroline."

"Yes, I'm very tired—and Miss Wildairs needs me." Why was she helping him?

"No cards in this house," rebuked Jane. "Her ladyship can trifle with her chances for the other world. She knows now pretty well where she'll

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go, I reckon. This house, sir," glaring at Marlton, "is the abode of a Christian family."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Don't count out hearts," said Marie, assuming one of Ora's simpers.

Over by the settee Jonathan was asking the heiress for permission to carry her camel's-hair shawl. "Would you kiss me, Ora?" he inquired, continuing the discussion the ladies had begun on entering the room. "You know you're a cousin, too."

"Do you think it—quite"—she smiled and hesitated—"the thing before meeting, Johnny?"

"The sin might keep us awake through the sermon."

"It isn't a very bad one," faltered Ora, solemnly, bending nearer.

XIX

Adoniram Meets Defeat

THAT second morning when Rose awoke in Courtlandt Street, dreaming again of the Lady Franklin, Adoniram was driving the ancient vehicle through the copse of young spruce-trees which flanked the level stretch fronting the Barracks. The master of the castellated pile in the distance no longer sang in a boisterous, rollicking fashion. His manner was that of a man who had parted company with mirth forever. Once he opened his sleep-laden eyes, gave a prolonged yawn, and, half turning, shook his unemployed fist at the stretch of guilt behind him.

"Oh, you bouzy one!" he cried. "Losing a linchpin and a-keeping me overnight in Woodbridge! You hare-spirited, fuddle-witted trut of a thing! And Martha waiting yonder to gibe me! Get on, ye! Get on! No wonder my lady could not abide ye."

The coach went ballooning along over the soft turf heedless of admonishments. The dust lay

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low, for the air was gray and moist. Across the roving fields behind the roofs of the earl of Perth's forgotten city—the queen of the Jerseys—a listless streak of dull carmine lay—a weary harbinger of a day born old. A company of blackbirds swung listlessly on wet wayside weeds like a tribe of feathered brigands. Off beyond the woods, in some cloud dome up near heaven a meadow-lark let free a madrigal.

“Whoa,” said the driver.

He started up and scanned the road before him. A few rods away was the great sycamore-tree where poor Lord Lovelace, the first chief magistrate under the crown and the successor of Anne's ribald cousin Cornbury, penned his farewell letter to the home-country on May-day shortly before his death. Heard knew the tale and had no liking for the spot at night. Even in the daytime he hurried past it, keeping his eyes on the King's Barracks. Gollup, there it was—his palace—double the size of any house in York he told himself. A shaft of sunlight was blazoning the windows.

As the nags swerved out of the beeches a host of gentle airs leaped from flowery hiding-places in Martha's garden and blew past him with friendly greetings.

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"'Tis purer here than at York," he mused. Then he opened his eyes very wide and stared. There was a broom of birchen twigs against the door. The lines received a lackadaisical pull, making one of the beasts stumble on the incline. "Am I topsy - frizy? Have I got my nightcap on?" he said, aloud, rising and almost losing his balance. "Is't Sefton Gavin's wagon I see—and my own duds piled high on it? 'Tis the devil's hobnails. Oh, pipers of Port Royal, Martha's up! Hear me old critter—she has found us out. I always did say her rheumatics was most whimsey. Oh, the like of it—she be leaving, she be! Oh, the like of it!"

"Martha," called Mr. Heard, "come out, 'ee varmit!"

A thin, swarthy little woman hopped out of the wide entry in a stiff-jointed manner. "So, sir," she called, mockingly, raising one hand in a chiding fashion, "my lord returns in his jingling chariot. Where's the hussy? Inside? Let me have at her. You wretch, to leave me these many days on my poor back—broken in your service, brute. I know her name—out wench!" she screamed.

Adoniram eyed her comically, aware that she hoped to rout him with her first attack.

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"You parrot-throated female—you trusted I be dead. None of your widdy parts me. All my duddery to Mam Stickets. I be back in time. I see, mistress. Never did like the mansion. Ambo' too fine for 'ee, fair maid of Swamptown!"

Mrs. Heard crept cautiously through the steaming straw to the door of the Lady Franklin and gave the knob a valiant pull. A crew of hard-drinking ducks followed at her heels, and when it flew open, showing an empty interior, they let up a chorus of angry squawks.

The figure in the forlorn livery leaned over the box and laughed. "Marthy, you are that comical. Didst think I'd bring a lady-love to 'ee?"

"Hide your wicked phiz," said his better half, clinking her pattens.

"A dish of broth, ma'am, to ease the damp, might help me to forgive yon mischief." Adoniram pointed to his possessions behind the currant-bushes.

The scornful lady came nearer the nags, her eyes flashing and her voice rising high in shrill, windy clamor.

"You old square toes, to go to York without a word. Don't slap me! I know 'twas

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York, you villain. And your goodwife just longing for a look at the place they say's finer than Ambo'. You've been sipping negus with a baggage."

"Oh, Marthy Ethelinda!"

"Don't cozen me, you vagabond—a-gadding in that poke of a thing!" Mrs. Heard began raising her hand, affecting mirth.

"It was a lady's coach, shrew—my Lady Franklin's."

"Yes, laugh on, Adoniram—you snickered at the parson no doubt when you was christened—and you'd do the same at my funeral!"

"You were laughing a moment ago."

"Keep it up—but I know who the baggage was—the two baggages. Oh, see him start—guilty viper! You went to town with the player-folk at Terrills'."

Mr. Heard slowly dismounted like a man still in the state militant. "Who told you this, you drab of a female?" he asked, hoarsely, grasping her arm.

"Jepson Barker."

"What?"

"He saw you leaving town, and that night he found the house by the green deserted. He came yesterday to seek you. 'Alack,' said he,

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'I'll be here with the first cock-crow.' Look down the road—off by the town-sweep."

With a leer he dived into an inner pocket of his upper Benjamin and drew her forth a package; turning he slowly ambled across the dreary yard. The first feeble children of the sun were dead and slovenly, spongy clouds hung in garlands across the oak tops almost obscuring the gray maze of roofs. A spot of black in the highway made him draw back.

"I can't stable 'em afore he comes. I'll drive her into the soldier's hall."

"Lordy," cried Martha, watching him eagerly, "a string of golden beads! If I could forgive you!"

"They'll help ye to it."

"A mummer's brat. I never did fancy her, always aping the quality. Such head tosses and fine, high-toned airs. 'Is the master at home, dame?' says she. I knew she led you on, Adony."

"'Tis but a child, woman—a child with tender eyes. Barker must be after her," he mused. "That was why she was in such haste. He sha'n't get one word out of me—not one word."

"And pink cheeks and sandy hair. You always did take to that color, Master Heard."

"Don't, woman; let by-gones be by-gones, if you

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can. Lackaday, we must hasten. Gee-up there you! Oh, Marthy, you've out the founding-chairs, the Melford chairs. I valy them too high for jest. My Lady Franklin sat in them oncet."

"Drat that trollop, too. Think more of my Lady Heard!"

After this display of human weakness Martha Ethelinda pattered across the yard, choosing each step in saucy triumph. Reaching the fence, she paused to scare away a roaming cur. "Adoniram," she called, after a momentary pause, "I see—I see a gig. Look, man, 'tis Barker's face—and a black. What shall I do? I told him last night to put you in the lock-up if he could. I felt then you deserved it; but my beads. Perhaps he will think them stolen goods. Oh, Adoniram!"

"Go out, Slammerkin, and give him some of your tongue while I find my wits."

Mr. Heard slipped behind the moonberry-vine into the wide entrance of his lordly domicile. When he reappeared his face was shining from a vigorous application of cold water. The dusty Franklin finery was cast aside, and over his round, robust figure he wore a suit of cool summer stuff. One knotty hand, still red from the exertion of driving, held a prized corn-cob. Fondling it

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with the pronounced scrutiny of an inveterate tobacco worshipper, he advanced to the gate as Jepson Barker jumped from the gig.

"So, Mistress Heard," said the young man, raising his arm as if brushing aside her curtsey, "the gadder has returned. And the ladies, sir," he said, looking up to the silent figure blocking the path, "are they housed? I see the marks of a vehicle in the road."

"They would not be abroad at this hour, my good sir. Easy minds keep easy beds among the gentry."

"No more gibberish, fellow. I command you—lead me to Miss Rose Whitebush."

"That would be a long way."

"Believe him, sir," said Mrs. Heard, dropping another curtsey. She wanted to say more, but her husband's eyes checked her.

He was scrutinizing the impatient youth by the doorstep in his quizzical, half-jocose way. All signs of weariness had flown from his countenance. "I'll rout his beauship," he chuckled to himself, as the pipe became pendulous in his hand. "I'm mettle, that I am." Aloud he drawled: "We have no ladies here. None but Mistress Heard."

The woman made a third curtsey, brushing against the coat-tails of the angry visitor.

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"Enough of this by-play," he said, hotly. "Sambo, bring the gig out of the highway. Now, Mr. Potterer, get it through your noddle. I will have the girl out. Her father is on my side. See, the ruts lead to the drilling-hall—open the door or Sambo will help you to it."

"Nay," leered Adoniram; "don't be too hasty. The lady there would not understand your manners, young sir. She's too high a quality, and, alas! she's deaf into the bargain. Why pesty her?"

The slave ran forward and raised the bar. Very slowly the doors opened showing the Lady Franklin in the cool, deep twilight of the mouldy room. Some friendly fowls had already sought the shelter of the side steps, and the sorry-looking old farm-horses, indulging in blurred reminiscences of their one town journey, did not even twitch a muscle at the voice of their late charioteer.

"Look inside? Other folks has been that curious this morn." He glanced over at the scared woman who seemed to have lost her tongue.

"I won't be made sport of. Where is the girl?"

"Ask the sun—when he comes out."

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"You will not tell me?"

"Never."

"I'll have you jailed for abducting her."

"You talk like a man of spirit."

Jepson Barker threw down his driving-gloves. Then he sniffed the air, unconscious of his audience. "Jasmine," he whispered. "It comes from the old coach-window. Oh, my heart wants to creep out of me and search for her! Sweet Rose of Amboy, where are you? Can't you see I'm half distraught, man. Speak, and each word shall be a gold piece. Here's a purse of shining metal. 'Twill buy you a less cumbersome affair than that ancient shandrydan."

"Softer there—my lady's coach is the most expensive critter in all the Jerseys. The Barker lands could not buy her. Tish, sir, ask me for a day in spring all blue and full of daffydown-dillys, or let me trade for a pound of youth. But, now I know you love the lass, I'll say I saw her yesterdawn as blooming as her name. Why do you seek to harm her, lad?" Mr. Heard's voice had sunk very low.

"Is the name of Barker so poor a thing? By the cross of St. George, you who prate to me of Franklin should know something of my forebears. The madam has many a portentous parch-

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ment plentifully besprinkled with Latin and bearing the royal arms to testify to our old-time high position. Must I lay them at your feet for a word of this girl—"

"A mummer's brat, too. Not a Mrs. Douglas, either. My own grandam saw her in 'Jane Shore' on the town green," said Mrs. Heard, roused at last from her stupor.

"Stop, Marthy. I know, sir, the Barkers belong to the blue stock—the flower of Ambo'. Lud, they could not make me tell tales on a lady, though! The bird has flown, boy. Maybe she was foolhardy. I'm not one to say ye nay. Maybe she weren't. Wimen can always scent a man. Half time wrong, like Marthy Ethelinda here. She wants to be rid o' ye, that's certain."

"But she can't."

"Follow on, then."

"I'll search for her forever."

"And a day, sir. Only leave us this one. Mistress Heard and me would adjust some little differences."

The woman curtsied again. "Go, Master Barker," she said, "and give over your fretting. The jade will come back. She ain't a fortune. She's got to return. As for Heard, you can't make him change his mind when it's once made

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up. He's the tightest man—his gums be bound with sour drops. Go, sir, and take your man—see, he's treading down all my Scotch-lilies."

The last of the Barkers raised his sullen, pondering face high to the dreary sky. The book of love he hoped to find there was a soiled and confused mass of lettering. He alone had besmirched it, for love to him was the most tyrannical of passions—a thing to make strong men weak.

Now he toyed with his oil-cloth-covered hat, pausing abruptly to listen. "What's that? There are voices in the spruces. The wind's turned."

Mrs. Heard and the black man hurried to the palings.

"Folks, massa."

"People are coming out of the hollow. They have ta'en the cut through the wood. A coach must have been overturned—broken down—met with highwaymen, perhaps."

"Run, Marthy."

Adoniram walked slowly to the fence followed by his unwelcome guest.

"The Philadelphia mail, I wager," the latter said.

"I never did care for those new, egg-shaped conveyances. Del'cate no-count things."

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"Look, Heard!"

"Where?"

"Why, 'tis Colonel Whitebush. Now, sir, you'll have to sing another tune. You can't deny a father his only daughter. I always knew I had a lucky star."

"Shines late o' night," laughed the proprietor of the Barracks, turning away as a line of travellers came along the road.

"O-ho, Colonel Whitebush, you're just in time," bawled the youth, leaning over the fence.

"Behind time, I should say. Dem the coach—through braces giving way. Such a squeaking and squalling. Every piece of luggage off the axle-trees—one of the beasts frightened. No back to middle benches—my seat to a widow with brats. Oh, Providence, you— What are you staring at? Why—"

"Rose!"

"Who?"

"Your daughter has flown with Jemima Diddle."

"You mean it?—my girl? You drove her to it, you villain. Gracious Heaven, this is the worst news of a black week! Couldn't you have waited a fortnight or two for your notes? Hast never loaned a gentleman before?"

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"'Twas long planned. All the trunks in the attic were taken, your wench says," answered the other, hotly.

"The theatre trunks?"

Colonel Whitebush sank down in the square of marble which the Heards used as a sun-dial, and, regardless of the passers-by and the staring group surrounding him, he buried his head in his hands. "The candle-lights have lured her," he said, articulating slowly. "She's gone—left me, to burn her wings in their flame. 'Tis Diddle's work! Curse the night I crept down Anthony Street, little more than a babe in swaddling clothes, to spend my first shilling on the theatre. She's lost to us now." His voice was growing hoarser. "Nothing can stop her, you jackanapes. She's gone in search of gipsydom where her mother grew. I tried to keep her from it—only one thing could have saved her."

"What was that?"

"Love—some good man's love."

"She has it," exclaimed the other, throwing off his Benjamin in his excitement.

"Did you take her to the Park, Adoniram Heard?" he asked, seizing the plump little figure behind the row of hollyhocks and endeavoring to choke him. "Answer, man!"



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The girl's father still kept his forlorn position.

"I'll tell now," the prisoner said. "Hamstring it, I whetter I'm sorry for him, sir."

"Well?"

"The Lady Franklin in the drill-room yonder bore her to—to Courtlandt Street."

"Courtlandt Street!" exclaimed the colonel, looking up dazedly. "Great God, man, you will have to seek her there!"

"I'm wild to start."

"What does it mean?" mused the father of Sallie Lowe's daughter, lost in memories.

XX

A Knocker Clangs in the Night

IN that dark Whitebush drawing-room Caroline, grown braver, was attempting to light another candle to speed the departing family up the street.

"The dream-lady still lives," said Cecil, softly, coming nearer.

"Beware," she smiled, and he thought he saw a tear steal down the witching eyes and flash away over the lashes. "The streets are open now for night services, and I might vanish at any moment."

"You wouldn't?" he ventured.

Her only answer was to turn back from him and walk slowly over to the window-seat, where she nestled tiredly among the silken cushions.

"Lady Grumpers wanted you for a fourth at whist. She feared though you might have some new manner of playing the game." His tone was a trifle malicious.

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"Miss Ora couldn't wear her pink slippers in the mist," she lisped, with a roguish air that completely disarmed him.

"I admire them," he said, looking at hers.

"Miss Ora's?" she asked.

"You can follow me."

"Where?" glancing at him gravely.

"To the Grumpers house."

She laughed, pleased to have entered the little trap he had laid for her.

"Her ladyship got one of the Bitmushes over under cover of the darkness. She vowed if any one was to suffer in Hades for playing cards on Sabbath day a Bitmush would take it most bravely—for it wasn't often a woman of title invited a boarding-house keeper into her home."

"The clouds are falling faster," she said, changing the subject adroitly. "See how thick the fog is. Oh, I'm glad you came. The house is almost deserted. My guardian is asleep in her chamber above-stairs, but below even the servants have gone."

"You are afraid—with me?"

"Of what?" she questioned, on guard.

"Of the rising wind. The street will soon be dry again. Hear it rattle the window-panes. I'm sure it must be travelling at the speed of a

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mail-coach. Think of the poor birds and the flowers!"

"Sir Poet," she said, gently, "you have a good heart."

Bending away from him she crept to her feet. For a moment she was Rose of Amboy — a bewildered child—an eerie thing struggling to spread her wings and be gone. The gown she wore was the simple blue garment Sallie once fashioned for Cassandra in "The Two Lovers," and somehow it made her frailer and more appealing than the Englishman had ever seen her. The rumpled hair, the limpid eyes, the strained look about the mouth, all spoke to him, and through the sequence of suggestion he battled with the overwhelming desire to take her in his arms and end her griefs and fears.

"You're thinking of home," he whispered.

Home! The name seemed to strike her, leaving a dull, hopeless feeling that she could not define, something like a physical bruise. Through the stress and cry of the wind, behind her two days in Courtlandt Street, back over rolling roads, sun-swept plains, and shadowy forests, memories railed at her. "If!" One little word, Dunny had said. She knew it to be the lost key to Castle To-Morrow, the mysterious-

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charmed something no man is able to recognize. If there had only been a place at the dear old Park for her, she would have found ere then a securer refuge for Jeminy and herself. If Uncle Jonathan were her father— If the youth before her could only be changed into Jepson Barker! She longed to stretch out her arms to him.

The sound of stumbling footsteps on the teeth of a gale broke upon her wild imaginings and made her hurriedly move towards Marlton as if seeking protection. There was an ominous silence, a presage of foreboding evil, and the lion's tongue on the Whitebush door fell back against the beast's brassy jowls.

She gave a stifled cry and looked out at the figure on the porch.

Cecil was making for the door when she placed her hand on his shoulder, entreating him to draw back.

"I felt he was coming to-night," she said. "I'm afraid to go. Wait! You cannot. I know who it is, Heaven help me! and I must see him alone."

"I can't leave you like this," he pleaded.

"You'll hear things that will make you despise me." She was weakening. "If you stay,

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remember I let you do so because you always wanted to learn my story."

"That's unjust. It's because I—I'll go back through the garden."

"Please stay," she called, now that he really made a move in the direction of the lower passage. "I'm such a piteous coward. If you knew all!"

She hurried past him as the clapper fell a second time, calling back: "Hide in the shadow. You must promise not to speak. You do? Jeminy, darling, our time has come," she wailed to herself. Then feeling a tinge of supreme emotion she pulled back the door.

The light in the hall was very dim and the man on the steps did not recognize her until she separated the drawing-room curtains.

"Rose!" he gasped, in a stupor of astonishment. "I've been knocking up the whole town, leaving a trail of bed-gowns, scurrying ankles, and curses in my wake. And now!"

"And now?" she asked, trying to control her voice.

"I am rewarded. Ah, how fine you look!" assuming a discriminating manner. "Your father sends me to bring you home. Yes, he has returned"—reading her eagerness aright—"he takes to the idea of our marriage, girl, and vows

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it must be soon. He feared you were not with his relatives, but turned into a theatre hussy. Thank Lucifer, you're not! It's a relief to find you not mounted on a tragedy mare."

"You'd give me up, if I were?"

"Never!"

She was trembling at his audacity, and as her voice broke there was a sudden movement in the back room that ended as abruptly.

"Why did you come?" she implored, gazing into his lowering face. "The Rose you know is dead. You pulled her petals from her one by one."

"The love I bear you led me here. That tiresome Jersey journey is naught to a man in my situation—dreaming of you through the summer days and the long, long nights." He commenced pummelling his chest like a coach-driver, and yet there was about him that indescribable assumption of the gentleman. "It would lead me to the end of the earth," he added, passionately, misreading her silence.

"Stop!" she cried, sickening. "My credibility is only rational. You love yourself and your own idea of love. I tell you the Rose you once honored with your strong affection is dead."

"Who are *you*, then?"

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The other name trembled on her lips and remained unspoken. He might guess the part she was playing and stay until the family returned from church. Her one desire was to get him away at any cost.

"Jepson Barker, I implore you to leave me here and return to Amboy."

"Not without you," he laughed, confidently. "You've got the spice of a Beelzebub in you. It took hours to draw the trail of your merry journey from Heard."

"Poor Adoniram! You war on weak women and men past their prime."

"I fight to win," he burst out, exulting in the dominance his mind was gaining over hers. "Come and get your cloak while we are alone." He was advancing to her, sure of himself at last, when Cecil Marlton dashed into the room swerving him aside.

"I could not help it," he said, his voice deep and agitated as he gazed at Rose, who was staring at him with a look of terror in her eyes. "I never feared it would be like this. You brute! Have you no manhood in you to hunt down a woman like a hare? The girl's half distraught."

"What right have you to stop me?" the other

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sneered. "Is this your true lover, lady of the downs? Yes, I remember. I am the running footman; but he shall never be the man in the coach. Let me pass, sir!"

"Only by that door."

Out in the new-born moonlight wind-swung branches tossed and beat uncannily against the night blinds; the street was full of gusty moans, and the chimney rumbling and clamorous. The men glared at each other, their breaths coming faster.

"She's mine. I've wasted a chest of my heritage on her father," said the last of the Barkers, his rage flaming to a white heat. "Out of my way!"

The youth fronting him in his indignation made a prince of a fellow. His eyes, usually so placid, were bright with a strange fire. His chest swelled and his arms grew rigid, suggesting strength without the least clumsiness. Into his voice swept the whole artillery of rising resentment as he almost hissed out the words, "Say that again and I'll fling you into the street!"

"Come with me now, or, when you do return to Amboy, Colonel Whitebush will have found his rightful abode," shouted his antagonist at the girl,

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paying not the smallest heed to the figure of the man opposite.

Rose gazed at both her strange guests alternately. The comedy of Courtlandt Street had gone beyond her grasp. This was an act she had not planned. An hysterical impulse to laugh seized her. The Whitebushes would soon be leaving church, mincing home like ladies of old Amboy. Lady Grumpers might desert her Sabbath evening diversions any moment and arrive at the house in pursuit of her seemingly recalcitrant kinsman. In her excitement she pictured the scene which would follow. "Rightful abode" meant debtor's prison. Her Jersey lover had arrived at his last resource — threats — vulgar threats! The expression of her face changed from despair to disdain. She no longer weakly prayed that Jeminy might hear them and descend. The future held no fears for her. She would awaken her foster-mother and prepare for leaving York. He would have to await them at the Courtlandt Street hostelry until they could steal away. It was time to ring down the curtain. The play was a pitiful failure. She was very, very weary. Who cared what happened? She would never marry Barker, she was sure of that. But could she leave the youth opposite

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— say good-bye forever — he would be sailing away to England soon. Even as she faltered, “I will go with you—back to my father,” a new pain beat and grasped at her heart.

“Stay!” called the voice that meant so much to her, now making her pause in the centre of the room. “I don’t know what is going to happen, but here, at least, I shall be near you.”

The other man in his fury was about to seize the girl when Marlton rushed forward and pinned him against the wall. “Begone!” he said, dragging him to the entry and half drowning his promises of revenge.

“Colonel Whitebush will set you at rights, whipper-snapper. You win to-night—to-morrow will be mine!”

“That day will never come.”

The door opened and slammed in a wild puff of wind.

Cecil Marlton turned to find the once high-spirited Caroline leaning despairingly over the empty fireplace.

“Why didn’t you trust me yesterday?” he whispered, drawing her to him.

“I was brave yesterday—brave and bold.”

He smiled, gayly tossing back his hair like a boy.

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"To-night the wind has blown you out of your course. To-morrow you'll be glad to be my country-woman once more."

"To-night I'm only Rose—a broken Rose. To-morrow a highway weed. Don't look at me like that—try not to pity me. I don't deserve a good man's pity. No, not one little drop. I must leave you now. Watkins is surely back by this time. I think I could sleep a hundred years, like Mr. Irving's hero. To-morrow—I hate the word, and yet it once was a castle luring me on and on—I want to tell Uncle Jonathan; he is my uncle, you know. I was trying to force myself to it at dusk-time, but you all came in—the others—no, not the others. I see Miss Jane's eyes—she'd turn me out into the gutter."

"Good-night," he said, very tenderly, holding back all he longed to say and smiling down at her. "Happy dreams!"

She had reached the staircase and was glancing over her shoulder at him as she ascended. The candle in her hand gave her a placid, almost benign loveliness; but for one of those brief moments the archness of spring glinted her face, then flitted wistfully away. "I've had too many," she faltered. "They all end alike."

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"This can be my dream."

"What shall it be?" she asked, very low and tremulous.

"A dream of a garden as wide as the world where there blooms a single Rose."



XXI

"Hurrah for Lafayette!"

REACHING the upper hall, Rose hesitated before deciding to go to Jemima. There was nothing to do but to wait for the morrow and then form some definite plan of escape. She could no longer assume the part of a sprig of fashion with a volcano ready to burst beneath her feet. The woman who once played second lead so merrily was not able to advise her. Half asleep and bewildered by the course of events, she had lost all bravado, and was again the clinging, timorous Jeminy of the Terrill castle. The whimsical voice became almost plaintive as Rose unfolded her story. "I should never have let you do it, darling," she moaned. "We were a pair of Jersey gabbies. Barker is on his way home this very minute, and what will your father say to me?"

"To-morrow is ours, at any rate," sighed the girl, throwing herself down beside Jeminy. Was

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it theirs, though? Uncle Jonathan would have to know in the morning. Then the happy thought came that Cecil was aware who she was, and loved her. The glad words seemed to cover the whole face of the night. They hung in glistening garlands from star to star and were wafted in on the breath of the sleeping garden, filling the room with a delicious sense of peace. She had met her own dream-lover face to face. Prince Charming, an ideal she had long followed, was realized. Did anything else really matter?

Through the night she kept waking for spaces of pondering. Jepson Barker had found her as he said he would. When he came a second time the game was his. There would be nothing gained by defying him. Her father was in his toils, bound hand and foot. She began groping through a labyrinth of intricacies—beating at doors that would not open—stumbling down dark alleys which grew longer and longer the farther she advanced. There was always the blessed hope, like a light in a vault, that Dunlap would save the child of his old-time favorite.

Besides, the purse still held the untouched gold pieces. She arose just to feel them, and as she opened Jeminy's reticule the red book stared

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at her, and she thrust it back angrily to the bottom of the bag.

A cannon's roar from the direction of Staten Island broke the stillness. "Lafayette at last!" she said, speaking to herself. She looked at Jeminy, who was still sleeping, and moved slowly to the door. In the hall her pace became mercurial, and she made a rapid progress to her own chamber. By the smooth, unmade bed she paused, longing to pray. The darkness was unbearable, and she hastily ran to the casements letting in the morning light. "Two dawns ago in this chamber life was a fairy tale," she murmured. "And now what is it? I see myself as the Whitebushes will soon see me." She gazed searchingly into the old Adams mirror, peering close to the glass. "My brilliant ruse is only a web of lies. I've deceived everybody—even myself. What does Cecil really think of me? Can he see below into my heart?"

Once she smiled, caught in a trance of sweeter reverie. Unbinding her wonderful hair she continued to soliloquize. "And to-day the play must live again and never flag—never flag a moment. I must keep on tricking and deceiving people until— No, I cannot do it. I cannot do

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it.” Her slight frame, feeling the chill of the room, shook in trembling protest.

Some distant, vagrant flute sent up the plaintive wail of the “Marseillaise.” The inmates of the house were stirring. Down in Miss Ora’s new aviary the lonely starling gave shrill vent to his misery.

Rose opened the Terrill trunk and began fingering her mother’s finery. “Poor old duds!” She smiled wanly. “You’ve had your day. It was wanton to bring you to light after all the restful years. Oh, mother, dear, your daughter will never follow in your footsteps. Fate has proved too strong for her at the very beginning.” She began to dress, seizing a costume all aglow with cherry ribbons.

There was a sound of gentle footsteps in the passage. Watkins knocked at the door, bearing an armful of jack-roses. “From Mars’ Marlton, wid his ‘spec’ful compliments,” she said, smiling and edging away.

A cry of delight escaped from the girl’s lips as she seized them. He loved her for herself alone. These flowers meant that he did not see her wickedness. White roses were for the shy and timid maiden whose eyes have never looked beyond spring’s meadow. No, she was not that. More

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like the gleesome, rollicking, red, red rose—"For Caroline, my Lady Comedy," read the card in the envelope. His audacity did not dawn upon her for a minute, and when it did she put out her hands to those elves of merriment always somewhere near her. It was a miracle, and yet deep in her inner consciousness she knew where the magic lay. Her musing was rich in promises for him. He should laugh on, then. The play until the epilogue should be canty and jubilant, a thing full of life—as hopeful as a lark. She pinned the daring roses on the lace bodice, frisking about and beating from Sallie Lowe's long-undisturbed garment frail puffs of musk and that fragrance of jasmine which had followed her from ancient Amboy. "Good-bye, doldrums," she cried. The memory of Jepson Barker no longer terrorized her. Outside, Courtlandt Street was full of mirthful hubbub. "Caroline of Cloudsley," she laughed, bowing to the vision in the mirror. "A last fling at fate, attic child." She was entering that magic garden that was his—the garden where she was to bloom—and she went very slowly, for at each step she heard Cecil's voice.

In the drawing-room Miss Marie was the first to greet her. "I am glad you took some ad-

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ditional winks instead of accompanying us last night," she said. "Scarcely anybody of importance attended service. The Hamilton pew was empty, and after the benediction Juliette Bridges told me that Mrs. Hamilton had made herself quite ill, having a state dinner every day, hoping the marquis would just drop in— Oh, look!" The little woman hurried to a front window. The City Guard, composed of the most aristocratic young blades of the commonwealth, was passing down Broadway. They made a fine showing with their bear-skin helmets surmounted by blowing plumes, their gold-laced and befrogged suits of immortal buff and blue, their clanking, war-voiced scabbards and prancing chargers.

Rose bent over the geraniums and waved her kerchief.

"And the Lydigs," said Miss Marie, moving away and resuming her conversation. "Cynthia was the sole occupant of the family sittings, and she only has one eye—the right one—and our pew is on the blind-eye side."

Jane was parting the library curtains, followed by a grinning Ora and a rather pale and wilted-looking Miss Wildairs. The latter wore some dead tragedy queen's gown—a colossal piece of

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finery entirely covered with funereal jet bugles. As she bent her head to the girl's roses she whispered, dolefully, "Jepson Barker is within a mile or two of Amboy, if he travelled all night!"

"Give them smiles, dear, for a pleasant remembrance," her companion answered. "This may be our last morning here, and we want to be missed. Hear the birds sing—and the music. See the banners flying across the way—and my roses. Don't they smell divinely?"

"Yes, child," answered the imposing Clarissa, but her face was still sad.

"Cheerful soul!" sighed the girl, making the wide mouth twitch.

"You saucy prompter—must I bite away my spleen?"

"Let's be gypsies until the curtain of this Whitebush theatre falls. We may never know a real camping-ground."

"Here goes for Caroline!" said the other, seizing her hands.

"No, not for her." Then Rose turned away, almost betraying a telltale blush.

During the morning meal she gazed many times in the direction of Jonathan. The mirth rampant throughout the city was rejuvenating him

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at a surprisingly fast degree. When stray snatches of martial music flooded the room he would bounce and twist about in his chair like a grown-up boy. Once he looked in the direction of Rose, and she knew by the pensive outline of his merry old face that he was thinking of their candle-light conversation. "Does he guess what I want to tell him—how near he was to my secret?" she asked herself; but the din of fire-crackers and the frantic reports of horse-pistols railed at the futility of her thoughts.

"Dost remember Jeremiah Fuddle as an ensign, Jane?" he inquired of his eldest sister. "We thought once you'd join the army."

"Don't, Johnny," simpered Miss Ora, giving him a coy pat on the shoulder. "She's not as happy to-day as some women are."

With that he hemmed in a boisterous manner and pulled his forelock thoughtfully.

Jane, fearing he was going to choke, looked at the floor, venting her anger at his daring on an inoffensive, half-smoked cigar.

"Your work, sir!" she bellowed, giving her deep voice full play.

"I never indulge in a puff here, on strict orders, ma'am." He crossed his legs, listening to a chance salute.

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"Mr. Marlton's?" questioned Rose, knowing full well whose it was.

Looking over her shoulder she was startled by the Englishman's appearance followed by Lady Grumpers, uncommonly frizzed and game-some. A slender, clerical gentleman hopped in the wake of her voluminous train. Her ladyship was trying to outdo her neighbor's visitors in point of gorgeous attire.

"I take my church with me on week-days," she confided in Rose's ear, after the greetings were over.

"Your cigar?" asked Jane, of the youth whose eyes were all for their honorable guest.

"Upon my honor, I decline it."

"It's mine," cried Jemima Diddle, with a spark of her old spirit. "It fell out of my comfit-box. I kept it because of its being touched by lips dear to me."

"Whose lips?" they all asked, led into the question by her forced emotion.

"The Prince of Wales."

"Yes," faltered the girl, relieved. The other women only stared.

"Did he visit the Didears?" asked chirpy Marie. "Ora and I are going to Cloudsley, Jane. Miss Wildairs has invited us."

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“I think I will give it up,” said Ora. “Something has happened. Don’t stare at me so—I fear I’m too good an American citizen. Of course, I appreciate the privilege of being received at our Caroline’s home. Oh, I can’t tell you—at least,” blushing becomingly, “not yet.”

It smacks of another scandal, Lady Grumpers was thinking, and she began rolling her large eyes expectantly.

“What do you mean?” demanded Miss Whitebush shaking her cousin by the arm.

“I’m going to—”

They never heard the remainder of the confidence, for just then Jonathan let fall a dish of tea and hurried from the room.

While the heiress held the floor Rose was looking up timidly into Cecil’s face. Never before had he appeared to better advantage, she told herself, as a feeling akin to terror seized her. Had she any real proof that he loved the mad-cap Caroline? A few telling looks, tender smiles, and strange, entrancing silences. Was the real daughter of the foreign Whitebushes the ugly thing he painted her that day in the City Hall Park? Perhaps he deemed *her*, poor masquerader, but a common baggage thrust in his path for chance amusement—a Lady Comedy—a

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creature of the boards. A host of wilful loves danced above her head like bad spirits. The roll of the distant drums was fraught with dire and hideous meaning. Then the fragrance of his flowers besieged her, tuning her mind to a song of infinite sweetness.

A tatterdemalion array of shore-men were passing the house, and the Whitebushes, followed by Lady Grumpers and Miss Wildairs in the rear, ran to the window-gardens, leaving Rose and Cecil alone. All the slow-footed night, in the dwelling a few paces away, he had lain awake thinking of her as a deceptive illusion, an ideal far away and indefinite, and there she stood before him, a blushing reality in white and cherry ribbons, more beautiful than he had ever seen her. To-day, on their walk down to the parade, he felt that she would clear away all his unanswered doubts of the previous hours. He knew the darkest side of her story. When he thought of Jepson Barker he mentally called him cur and clinched his fists, hoping to meet him a second time, and alone. Her smiling eyes seemed to have forgotten the excursion he had taken into her private concerns. Stepping forward, he put his hand on hers, insensible of the action. As she slipped away from him,

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mastering her own delicious confusion, a feeling of faintness pursued him, hinting of an abyss of suffocating, poignant agony beyond. Watkins was handing her a letter on a silver salver, and he watched her as she read it with her back to the group at the windows.

Suddenly Rose gave one long-drawn-out expression of astonishment and crushed the paper in her hands. The lights of the Park were flaring up again for her, dimming the lights of Courtlandt Street—shutting out everything, even Marlton's adoring smile. She could scarcely believe what the missive contained as the tumult of joy beat the words into her brain:

"I have won the day, and you are to have Miss Johnson's part. It's a fat one, too. Bringing my tame ogre Simpson to your house on our way to the *Cadmus* jamboree. Lovingly yours,

"EMMA WHEATLEY."

Cecil gazed at her half suspiciously. Was she reconsidering going with his rival? What did the change in her manner mean? She read all his increasing astonishment, but dared not answer. Even Jeminy should not know. There was the possibility that either or both of them might spoil her plans. This last venture should be hers alone.

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"Such a carriage!" said Miss Ora, graciously, to Jane, pointing to the girl as she pinned an unwelcome spray of oleander in the shamefaced Jonathan's button-hole.

"If your father had been an earl instead of a mere money-getter, you too could have learned the Regent Street bend," answered the ready-tongued Jane, biting. The racket for the Marquis de Lafayette was outraging her sensibilities.

"There go the Bitmushes!" exclaimed Lady Grumpers, peering through her quizzing-glass at the south side. "Sukey's wearing my purple-striped scarf. She got it out of me last night—and it was a birthday present from Sir Samuel, too!" The widow gave a sly, unctuous laugh directed at Jane.

"Won it at cards?" asked Marie, in a sepulchral whisper.

"Yes, worn rag. I'm vastly tired of it, and I didn't want to hurt her feelings by paying my losses in money. She plucked me quite sixty shillings!"

"Let's be off," commanded Marie, her most attentive listener. Then, under her breath: "I can't stand that woman's lack of proper feeling. The neck-decoration Samuel gave me is in the cedar box with other sacred mementoes."

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“My parasol,” giggled Ora, excitedly, color coming again to her wrinkled cheeks; “and we’ll each carry our turkey-feather fans. You use this one, Caroline.”

“I’m not accompanying you,” said the girl, making everybody hold up their hands in wondering dismay. “I never walk so far, and you know coaches are not permitted below Chambers Street.” Was this to be the last falsehood?

Cecil Marlton looked at her reproachfully as his exacting hostess gave his coat-tails a tug, calling out, “Come, sir, you’ll get material for your book.”

“Will you ride pig-a-back?” laughed Jonathan, inquiringly, putting Ora’s proffered arm through his.

“What an ear-splitting noise!” said Marie, tying on her bonnet and opening the front-door. “Listen to the guns for old Thirteen!”

“I fear the walk, too!” Jeminy whimpered, drawing back.

“Go!” beckoned Rose. “Do, darling, and keep them out a year if you can—and when you return you’ll be the happiest woman in the town of Gotham—the gladdest Jeminy this side of heaven.”

“Come,” called Jane from the steps.

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There was a riot of musketry, boom on boom, as the occupants of the Whitebush house descended their porch two by two.

Helping Lady Grumpers across the narrow street, the Englishman loitered for a last glimpse of Rose. She was gleefully clapping her hands and executing a little dance to the joy of the passers-by, and somehow he could not resist smiling as he gazed at her, although the troubled expression remained on his strong, young face. Once he hesitated and raised his right hand bashfully to his lips.

The witching thing clinging to the sun-bound, Doric column understood, for she paused, bent her radiant head over his roses, and shyly kissed them.

XXII

Caroline Drops the Mask

"HURRAH for Lafayette!" sang the girl, romping into the house. "They've gone—gone—and the Whitebush theatre is really mine for the whole blessed morning." Watkins stared at her like a being under the spell of a Circe as she glided about, now flitting through the library with one of the primly reproachful-looking drawing-room chairs, mounting Miss Ora's favorite settee while she made the stiff, Nast vases on the chimney-piece caper into new positions, and turning the gaunt marbles from their musings on defunct Whitebushes. "My friends are coming, custodian of the dusters!" she called to the startled black. "My mother's friends from the blithe land of gypsydom, where there's never a plague to haunt one, and those who wander there dance all day like hopeful sand - boys. Mind you, don't tell on me"—tripping to her—"and, dear Watkins, do get out some of Miss

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Jane's Madeira—that's a good girl." The flute-cries and the drum-beats filled the proud old room, making it sway to that tide of merriment sweeping through the humming, resonant streets.

Pausing a moment, two faces haunted her—Jeminy's and his. She wanted them both, but if the former had stayed away from such an important ceremony as the disembarking of the marquis, she felt that the family would have suspected something unusual was about to happen. She was too fond of playing fast and loose with them. This time she had not erred.

Her revived comedy could approach its climax without interruptions. Feeling the thrill of that never-to-be-forgotten morning, she stood silent for a moment drinking it in. As for Cecil Marleton, when she thought of him she mistrusted her own baffling emotions. His words uttered on the stairs the previous night were cloistered in the sacred deeps of her heart. She knew now the magic by which she held him—was its power so very strong? Could he follow her along that road his world viewed with such abhorrence?

She glanced impatiently at the clock which chimed the hour of eleven, then flew to the window. The black returned with the wine, looking

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askance, like some large, shy animal as she gave way to the lure of the other's magnetic spirit of revelry. With a cry of joy the girl threw up the sash. "Here they come! Oh, you darling Mrs. Wheatley! See, Simpson's with her—and Dunny has the other arm. I wish Jeminy could have stayed. That's Mr. Placide in the rear—run, Watkins—"

With her quick and vivid sense of the dramatic she leaned out over the scarlet flowers, making the striplings who had watched her performance on the porch slap their sword-sides and fairly howl with delight. "She's a spanker! By George, what a face!" they said among themselves, mounting the stoops of deserted south-side residences for a better view. But Rose, totally unconscious of their ogling, had eyes only for the famous actress and her court.

"Welcome to Whitebush theatre," she called. "The managers are all out. I'm glad you found *me*, for my engagement here is almost over. Yes, you dear things," merrily running a little away from them, and lifting her skirts above the peeping shoes, "you seem to bring a sweeter, fresher air up the street."

"The pretty yellow bird of a baggage," laughed Mrs. Wheatley. "She's Sallie Lowe to the life in

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'Belvidera,' " raising her reticule at her present manager. "Some of us knew it would be so, Miss Caroline! I remember the assumed name, you see, and Dunny has told me everything. Why, I think it's the most frolicksome joke. Simpson's eager for you now"—turning—"hey, pepper-pot?"

"I will be his spokesman," mimicked the ever-frolicking Harry, "and present you with this sprig of laurel in lieu of first week's salary."

"As my ladies and gentlemen say," acquiesced Simpson, his parchment-colored face sneeringly benign.

"What a handsome room!" remarked the leading-woman of the Park, strutting about; "real lace for tidies, and guinea-a-yard brocade for curtains. Lor', a chair with springs! I've wanted one cruel bad. Isn't it fine"—bouncing up and down. "I feel like a mayor's consort. Why, Rosie girl, if I could live here and sit on a chair like this all day long, I'm not sure I'd be over-anxious to take to the boards!"

A flush came to Rose's cheeks. She looked at Dunlap, hoping for some expression of sympathy, but he was inspecting the books in the cases. "I hate the room," she said, speaking very low and defiantly. "It is always trying

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to smother me with its grandeur. Keep me away from gypsydom and my mother's people!"

"Gypsydom, glorious gypsydom!" chorussed the youth at her elbow.

"Only a land of puppets, child, with Simpson over there for the showman."

The woman admired and looked up to by the Gotham of her day as one of the finest exploiters of the histrionic art started from her seat with half a sigh.

"Yes, puppets; I say it again—buffoons—monkeys, the best of us. Crying because we are told to cry, simulating laughter though our real hearts be God knows how heavy. Fluent ninnies who toil at the treadmills of artifice—and for what? 'The applause of the multitude,' you say. Empty hand-clapping that dies away and is lost in a night. A hundred years from now, when we who stand in this room to-day have gone the way of the winds—ay, even Courtlandt Street itself—think you that in all this great town one heart will beat faster or slower at the name of Emma Wheatley."

The girl clasped her roses as if afraid, and her wandering eyes gazed questioningly at the portrait of her great-grandmother, Dorothy Desbrosses, hanging just above her head. For a sec-

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and everybody appeared to be listening to the martial air in the distance, so amazed were they at the transient change in their buxom, smiling companion.

"Pop-weazel it, ma'am," said Simpson, finding a second puff of angry, weather-beaten voice. "After clawing me for two days to take the wench instead of Johnson, now that I've a mind to have her, you treat us to a dose of twopenny sentiment."

"Mr. Simpson, sir, you're a crawfish!" sputtered Placide, growing red in the face. "Another word, and I'll throw up my wretched part and be off to Orleans."

During this discussion Rose spoke only to Dunlap. "I've heard all she says—Jeminy knew the drudgery and the small rewards—and yet I still long to go on."

"The actor blood," Dunlap nodded, acquiescently.

"Sky-rockets, Jem used to say."

"The boards will spring beneath your feet. The Wheatley's tired, alack. We all grow tired when years creep on us unawares. Come— Mr. Simpson, of the New Park, would gauge your talent."

"I heard you, traitor," cried the actress, re-

Caroline Drops the Mask

covering. "Remember, my good man, a woman is only as old as she looks. Do I appear over—well, say, twenty-eight?"

"Eighteen," corrected her youthful admirer, promptly.

"Really!" she beamed, throwing a radiance of meaning into the word. Then changing her manner. "Oh, gracious, the *Chancellor Livingston* will be docked. Harken to the cheers. Please, Simpson, have done with business—not that we would be unsociable, dear Rose."

The manager of the Park crossed from the distant end of the room where he had been exultingly examining a cabinet of priceless Bow figures—the only ones of their kind in the city. As he turned away, almost upsetting Placide, who was twirling his hat on his cane, he peered into the library for a moment, carefully scrutinizing the furnishings about him and rubbing his palms as he computed their probable cost. "'Twill be the talk of the town," he mused, aloud. "The family big-bugs, the girl a good looker, and the story—egad, when the Toe Club hears it!"

The other men and women watched Rose, who excused herself and disappeared hurriedly through the doorway. When she was out of sight Simp-

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

son said, ironically: "Cheer up, my good people, you are none of you asked to receive the red-haired Frenchy. We'll be on time. Think of my playhouse, ma'am." He paused by Mrs. Wheatley. "A little while ago there was talk of thin houses from you! This girl is going to fill them for us—an honorable—a ladyship. It isn't every one who could carry a play into real life."

"Many of us would not care to," answered the other, tartly, unaware that the girl had returned and was parting the curtains.

A hurt look crossed her face, but she bravely opened her mother's yellowing copy of "Romeo and Juliet," and, advancing to Dunlap, raised her eyes to his, seeking a mute benediction, then stepped nearer the window, for the room was growing strangely dark. A hush fell upon them all; wineglasses were surreptitiously laid behind books and screens; and even Watkins, hidden in Jonathan's closet, held her breath and ceased her strident, barbaric mannerisms as the beautiful words of the garden scene rippled from the lips of that pixy of the old Terrill attic. Rose Whitebush was forgotten, and the jade Caroline a million leagues away. A love-lorn Juliet's mind was opening to them, and, observing her gestures

Caroline Drops the Mask

and following her mood, they marvelled at the way this raw recruit fused herself and the character she was assuming. Her voice spread into new tones and inflections, now calm and constrained, now thrilling with tenderness, now glowing with passion. Once more she saw an Amboy garden flooded with moonlight and smelled the scents of phlox and sweet-maid's blossoms, and the Romeo who waited in the boxwood maze beneath the honey-locusts was no Jepson Barker—the dream-lover stood there—she spoke only to Cecil Marlton.

A sullen shriek of thunder, like a chorus of menacing human cries, cut short her speech. Every eye was upon the slight, trembling figure, and yet no one uttered a word, so unexpected and startling was her exhibition of talent. Dunny recovered himself first, kissing her hands in his quaint, courtly way. Emma Wheatley smiled as she exchanged glances with an abashed Placide, and the renowned Mr. Simpson stalked forward, uttering, in his excitement, a characteristic effusion. "I never hoped it, Miss Whitebush. We were going to bill you as Caroline of Courtlandt Street—the world of fashion would bite at that o' nights. We must add daughter of Sallie Lowe—the talented daughter, miss—yes, I mean it."

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

She was searching his face, trying to fathom the significance of the words.

"Caroline of Courtlandt Street!" A light broke upon her.

"You wouldn't dare?" she questioned, aghast.

"There's a fortune in it."

"Oh no—no!" She was piteously endeavoring to cover her burning cheeks.

"Such a chance for marvellous advertisement comes only once in a lifetime."

"I've been bad enough already."

"It appears to me unseemly," said the manager of the old school, hastening to her rescue like an aged knight without mail or charger. "In my time we never dragged a woman's private concerns before the public."

"That was the mouldy, ancient Park. At the New Park, as you call the town's foremost theatre, we know something besides foggy traditions—these are modern times!"

Rose gazed out into the black street, letting Mrs. Wheatley put her arms about her. She was absorbed in pondering. Could she allow herself to become a public scandal to the Whitebushes for the sake of the city's recognition of her gifts? They had been good to her in their own proud, exalted fashion—the only way they

Caroline Drops the Mask

knew. Her comedy in the Whitebush house and that before the whole town were two different matters. She had come in revenge to settle an old score, and what was gained? All her lies were risen into a garden of nauseous weeds, and this man who held the keys to the kingdom of gypsydom looked upon them as brilliant flowers.

Every thoughtful word and chance kindness given her in that room grew and multiplied under retrospection. "Am I afraid of what might happen?" she asked herself, angrily. "Have I turned into a gentle ninny?" Battling with this rising passion, she closed her eyes, then opening them again she looked down at her mother's one-time costume, and from it there crept plaintive wafts of far-away Amboy jasmine—that vague aroma of yesterday, clinging to all Sallie Lowe's possessions. And the face of the old miniature seemed to be chiding her. "I will come only as Rose Whitebush, my rightful name," she said, startling the room.

Outside there was a sweep of rain that splashed against the panes.

"And lose your great chance?" Simpson roared, incredulously.

"Yes." She choked at the word.

"I'll give you fifty a week."

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"Don't rob the treasury, gov," said Placide, pouring out a goblet of Madeira and leering like Folly in the pantomime.

"My salary," Mrs. Wheatley whispered. "I'm scared stiffish. It's an offer in a lifetime, girl."

"Don't tempt me."

"You will come?" asked Simpson, again.

"Little mother tells me not to." Her face was uplifted to the darkened heavens. "No—I cannot do it." She turned to her mother's old friend. Dunlap took the daughter of Sallie Lowe in his arms, and glared at the others over her bowed head.

Outside there was a patter of footsteps—the noise of hurrying feet slipping on the wet pavement.

The girl raised her head from Dunlap's shoulder as the door opened, and gave a pitiful, anguished cry. Between the storm-tossed folds of India work stood the party which had started so decorously an hour before. Impish streams of water trickled down their bonnet-strings and over the smooth ringlets beneath. Lady Grumpers's bright ostrich plumes shook like tropical flowers drenched with dew, and the voluminous skirts of all the ladies were turned for the moment into saucy, unmannerly fountains. The

Caroline Drops the Mask

roomful of actors taken by surprise struck old comedy attitudes and stared with frank curiosity at the people in the hall.

Jane, in the advance-guard, half blinded and ejecting the rain-water from her mouth in gurgling sputters, attempted to shriek, but Jeminy, following on her heels, cut short her agony by falling against her as she rushed forward to Dunlap, giving one of her wild, hysterical chuckles.

"What's this!" screamed the other, seizing the arms of Ora and Marie and nearly knocking their heads together in her intense, unrestrained excitement. "Caroline and wine—my 1790 Kitts' Canary"—seizing the bottle—"and look, that man is an actor"—pointing to Dunlap. "I felt it by his dickey. What, you know him, Jonathan?" as her brother went forward. "Our English cousin was in his arms! Is our home turned into a brothel? Speak, somebody, or I shall lose my wits! That girl's face—I was sure I'd seen it before— Oh, mercy! I'm swooning—get out of my way, you fool"—to Ora. "Tell me her name," she wailed.

The room was waiting for Rose to speak.

XXIII

The Lights Flicker Out

FOR a moment Rose felt a dare-devil longing to dash from the room, fly down the Whitebush steps, and seek some remote, sequestered corner where their wondering looks could not follow her. Then she thought of poor old Jeminy already overcome at the sight of Dunlap. No, such an act would be a coward's one resource—she was not so craven as that! They were all watching—the Whitebush household in a gasping, bedraggled, awestruck row; Lady Grumpers complacently relishing the scandal, as she stroked the ostrich plumes on her chip, and every second minute nodded with maliciously incredulous approval in the direction of her distressed kinsman. Through the terrible silence the girl caught the whisper of his roses, and, listening, she forgot the horror of her situation. Why was Mrs. Wheatley sweeping majestically towards her followed by the company of actors? They

The Lights Flicker Out

were leaving—going forever. Now she struggled for her choked voice.

"Caroline is dead!" she cried. "She passed away a few moments ago"—looking at the manager of the New Park. "I see by your faces that you expect a merry funeral—yes, all of you. And you'll get it, Heaven help me, for I'm her substitute. Ay, your niece, Miss Whitebush! Is it years or days I've been longing to say it to you? Your gypsy niece"—she stretched forth her arms, letting the gauzy sleeves fall back—"the daughter of—tell the name!" she commanded, turning imperiously to Dunlap.

"The best comedy actress of her time," faltered the old man, feeling the new sensation of stage fright.

"Sallie Lowe!" broke in his mentor.

"The Darling of the Park!" echoed the Thespians, led by Placide.

"The Old Park," corrected Simpson.

"Don't say more, gentlemen," rebuked Jonathan. "See—you're killing my sister—"

In truth the irate Jane was still clutching Ora and Marie, indulging her choler until it fumed into a whirlwind of rage. "You mean to tell me you're not the daughter of Lord Peter Whitebush?" she shrieked. "You've never been to

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

Cloudsley? She lied—yes, *lied!*—forgive the vulgar word, ladies—you who are ladies—about the court. Oh, you sneaking viper!”—pointing to the now sobbing Miss Wildairs. “It’s too much!”

“And I’ve just ordered a cap most as large as a wash-boiler, because she assured us ’twas the fashion,” hissed Sir Samuel’s widow, changing her complacent expression.

“What will our neighbors think when the news is scattered broadcast?”

“What will the whole town think?”

“And consider our father’s feelings, if he happens to be looking down at us from above!” said Marie, clasping her hands reverently.

“You forget my uncle the bishop,” lisped Ora. “He was always more punctilious in matters of decorum than *your* parent!”

“And Lord Cockcroft Whitebush, famed for having ridden beside the Duke of Marlborough at the battle of Hastings,” continued Jane.

“And my own aunt Serephima, who was too proud to speak to Mr. Jefferson after she discovered that he wore red underwear!”

“And Thomas Duddeny Whitebush, vicar of St. Giles’s!”

“And Mary Ann Whitebush, who married a Biddle!”

The Lights Flicker Out

"And her seven daughters, who died of cholera-morbus!"

"Have pity on us!" screamed Placide, checking the torrent of defunct greatness. "They may all be hotter at this moment than you are—"

No man ever put more meaning into a single line than he could, but the Whitebush clan was not possessed of a very highly developed sense of humor, and failed to see his point, so he continued, ironically: "Spare, oh, spare your troubled feelings. The dignity of the noble Whitebush name is untarnished. Your niece has just declined to join us on the boards!"

All the while Cecil Marlton stared at Caroline. The moth was caught at last—waiting with pitiful, bruised wings to be crushed. Those old eyes he had always felt sure would find her out had come upon the secret. How white and frail she looked! The cherry ribbons twined about her slender waist, and the lovely throat faded into dusky magenta. Outside the storm shadows still lingered on the grass. What were her exalted relatives going to do to her? Where would she go? As he looked through the dripping panes, afraid to risk another message from her twitching mouth, he seemed to be watch-

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

ing the chimney-swallows glide in swift gyrations across the path of clearing sky, but in reality he was picturing an ancient gilt coach such as the greatest ladies of his land used for court ceremonies galloping up the high-road of his life. Over dimly remembered years it went, laying low in the dust scenes that were better forgotten, griefs and prejudices, loves blind, or living on half starved. A face smiled at the window—an April face that spoke of things the violets hint of in the wood. Then, in a flash, it vanished, and to bring it back he knew he dared fling aside all the fetiches and traditions of his proud and stolid race. For one more smile the chariot should ride up to the very cross where Britain nails her faith. And when it did appear again, over the sunny hair, the opaline, dovelike eyes, the warm, red mouth hovered the nameless charm of roses—sweet, coquetting roses whose souls were born of glee.

She was smiling now — the old, delicious, witching smile. Her mother's spirit was guiding the end of the little play. Although the room's worshipful respect and admiration were lost to her, she had gained Cecil's trust. Out of what appeared to be the wreck of her life crept a faint, scarcely perceptible roadway — a twilight path

The Lights Flicker Out

astir with scents of budding things! She no longer cared to defy the Whitebushes. "It is true," she said to Miss Jane, "I have declined the offer," and her eyes again sought Cecil's.

"Can I be sure? You may still be deceiving us?"

Jonathan tried to lessen his sister's ire.

Suddenly Mrs. Wheatley stretched out her longing arms. "Come!" she said.

Simpson interrupted her, snorting, angrily, "You're not thought overmuch of here!"

The girl appeared to be pondering, and yet the Englishman could not find his voice.

"Do, dear!" urged the actress, glancing disdainfully at the other occupants of the room as she seized the door-knob. "Come where we all knew and loved your mother. You will find a real home with us. It may not contain many of the syllabubs of life, but at least, Rosie, you'll have roots in our hearts. Why, I wouldn't stay in this loathsome, narrow-minded, barbaric, vile habitation for a hundred chairs with springs and a carpet woven by the pacha himself. Take that, ma'ams! You moth-eaten, puce-faced, prissy old tabby-cats, and good-noon to you. Here, Harry, my arm—and you, Simpson, the other. To-day I know there are people in the world

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

worse than"—she paused a moment, ending with a laugh—"the worst of managers!"

The pilot of the Park bowed to the Wheatley as if he enjoyed her rating, and looked once more in the direction of Rose. "The most generous proposition I ever made," he announced. "Gad! her face carries me away. I never saw Sallie Lowe, but dash me if she was anything like her daughter!"

"An angel, sir," gulped Jeminy.

"Don't, darling," said the girl, "we're going back to Jersey."

"How glad she'll be!"

"Going back to our own Terrill castle."

A sob answered her.

"Going back to dream over all this in the attic where the rats are always holding carnival. Forgive me, Miss Jane. Oh, try and forgive me, every one of you." Her wild mood had vanished now. "I never had anything much in my life. I was starved with longing. Poor Caroline, she pined for a peep at town and now it's over!"

"I see heredity in it," said Miss Whitebush. "I lay it at your father's door."

"Your door should have been his. Life was never meant to be anything but a Courtlandt Street for him."

The Lights Flicker Out

"He wouldn't like it in this year of 1824," quavered the irrepressible Lady Grumpers. "A boarding-house—a finishing-school for underbred Western misses—that name of Susquehanna on the door-plate across the way is enough to turn one's stomach."

"What the lass tells us is right," said Jonathan. "Robert should never have left our father's house."

"Be careful what you say, brother. He's watching you from his portrait. Don't you remember when he told us that he'd walk out of his grave if Sallie Lowe or her brat—yes, those were his very words—ever entered this house?"

"Fol-de-rol-de-riddle!" sang Placide to the group pausing at the threshold. "We'll see ghosts next."

"Good-bye, Caroline!" the retreating actors called.

"You must be half a Whitebush," tittered the Wheatley. "If I were in your boots I'd send every one of them, dead or alive, to the devil!"

"Hush, Emma," said Dunlap, tapping his stick and scowling about, "the girl has a heart."

"Perhaps she hasn't," she drawled, in a stage whisper. "Look at my young spark by the window."

Cecil Marlton was endeavoring to speak to Rose.

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

What he wanted to say she alone knew, for the only answer she made was to nod her head very sadly.

It was a farewell to the land she loved.

"I cannot come with you, Dunny," she called. "See, Jem knows and understands—I could not use them so—"

He came back and tenderly kissed her hand.

"Good-bye," floated in the dying voices, and as they drifted away the song of the starling was heard—a song of a single low note full of longing for Amboy flowers, skies, and peace.

Rose was looking out into the rainbow—the comedy of Courtlandt Street was over.

"I could forgive you if I hadn't bought those pink slippers for prayer-meeting," confided Ora. "Don't tell the others; I wouldn't dare let them know."

"Oh, what must our father and Flavius, the bishop, think!" repeated Marie for the tenth time.

"Lay it to the Frenchman," said Lady Grumpers. "They all bring bad luck. Once when I was a girl a monseer called on me, and I—well, perhaps I shouldn't repeat it in public, but it seems as proper an occasion as I shall ever get. I actually lost my stocking-string—hem—after tying it three times about my limb."

The Lights Flicker Out

"Don't," wailed Jane; "I shall never, never recover from this awful day." Then she limply sank upon her favorite settee.

"You're too superior, ma'am!" screamed Placide, poking his head through the curtains. He had loitered some paces behind the others, hating to part company with the fine Madeira. "You're only dirt—just dirt—the Bible says so—we're all of us dirt. As for me, ma'am, I'm thinking that girl there is the truest bit of a gentlewoman your dwelling has seen in a long time, and your dad, the bishop, and all the whole slubbergasted crew of gentilities, if they're—well, ma'am, as squeamish as you are—why, old gal, I'd damn 'em before I saw 'em!"

"The gates are closing," said Rose, bewildered by the noisy indignation of the ladies—"shutting us out, Jeminy."

After the storm the room was strangely still. She looked at Cecil—trying to touch him, although he was across the room. There were no lights left in the world but his limpid eyes. The candles of the Park were dead. "Gypsy-child, my own little Lady Comedy," she thought she heard him whisper, as she fell forward into Jonathan's strong arms.

XXIV

Over the Grumpers's Garden Wall

CAROLINE would never come back to Courtlandt Street again, and Rose told herself she was no longer the madcap, saucy jade who rode out of Amboy bound at whatever cost for the forbidden kingdom her mother had known. The tall summer lilies which bordered the garden-paths and held back the crowds of drowsy flowers gave fragrant import of the change. Robins and thrushes hopping nestward among the fir-tree shadows twittered of it. All the little stars piercing the cool, gray robes of mother night were smiling. The sweet dusk was full of vague, enchanting, tremulous illusions. In a few swift-flying hours the Whitebush door would close, shutting her out forever. But now this brief dream-time was something to be culled like a sprig of lavender or rosemary and kept in the fairest chamber of the mind. Watkins had brought her news of the tryst unknown to any

Over the Grumpers's Garden Wall

of the household. Behind that moss-stained, ivy-clad wall extending from the Grumpers house about the Whitebush garden like a friendly arm Prince Charming waited.

"Cecil," she called, softly.

There was a very faint halloo.

"I escaped from the house, dear—somehow I feel they're almost sorry for me."

"They shouldn't be!"

"Aren't you?"

"I wouldn't want to live in Cloudsley, in reality; it's not half as fine a place as its name."

"Caroline lives there—the other Caroline."

"Yes."

"Tell me, is she really very ugly? I wish I could see your face, Cecil. Isn't there any way of getting up on the wall?"

"We have one sweet-pea vine."

"There's a watering-pot here."

"Come where the brick has fallen out."

She hurried through the dewy grass, catching her gown in a juniper-bush as she knelt down and obtained a view of his face.

"Ah!" he said, rapturously.

"Is she?"

"Is she what?"

"Does she look like me?"

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"Not a bit."

"Why did you say that you might have married me when we first met? Of course, thinking that I was the real Caroline?"

"Her father wanted to join our lands."

"I'm very poor," she sighed.

Overhead a trail of glowing rockets lit the sky, twisting and rioting among the stars, and jewelling the moon's disappearing face until it looked like the phantom chest of Captain Kidd. Belated clouds drifted into ruby, emerald, and sapphire showers, and then burned up in swirling seas of golden sparks.

"I wonder what your side is like," she mused, bending lower.

"Only a barren waste."

"Lady Grumpers told me she was quite elated over her Bourbons!"

"I know a lovelier rose."

"Oh, Cecil, can't you find a ladder?"

"Are you fearing the caps again?"

"Silly boy, you want to drag me back to the babe-in-the-wood days. On Broadway you—" The wind caught her voice.

"I'll climb the apple-tree!" he said, frantically.

"Then it will be an easy jump to the wall."

"Take care; Lady Grumpers is at the window."

Over the Grumpers's Garden-Wall

"The lilac hedge hides me."

"Mercy! there's Jeminy hanging George Washington's cage from her balcony."

"A knowing bird."

"How can you speak of her in that way!"

"Him, I mean."

"You thought her a puppet-show woman once."

"You know the reason."

"That's worse than a bird."

"A Jersey lark?"

"Jersey larks are crows—"

"Forgive a foreigner."

He climbed down to her side, making a rapid path through a tangle of opening primroses, doffing their wind-tossed heads to him as he passed. Out in the circle beyond the juniper-bush she saw that he was looking tired and sorely perplexed.

"You're unhappy over finding me out," were her first words, when he took her hands in his.

He did not answer, continuing to gaze at the yellow gown he had seen first over the river at Paulus Hook.

"The others are all folded up in the Terrill trunk," she said, answering his glance. "I shall never need them again."

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"How good you were to the Whitebushes!" he whispered, impulsively. "I know you still love the stage."

She was silent, her head turned a little to one side.

"Some day in the future we may find you the great actress you were bent on becoming."

His words hurt her in a vague, undefined way.

"I shall come every night to see you if you will let me."

"You'll be back in London town," she faltered, sadly.

Over the wall a band of wandering musicians were playing the already popular air of "Home, Sweet Home," which had greeted them when they first landed in York. Its melting cadences filled the garden, lessening the distant cries for the French hero.

She buried her head in her hands.

"Don't," he entreated. "You must see and feel that I—"

"Rose!" called Jeminy, stepping out on the balcony.

"It means farewell," she said, softly, coming nearer to him.

Lady Grumpers's sash went up with an imperi-

Over the Grumpers's Garden Wall

ous creak. "Cecill" she shrieked, at the top of her lungs. "Don't pick any more of my gooseberries." Sir Samuel's widow prided herself on her astuteness, and her motive was the same as Jemima's.

The broken fountain hid the pair from prying eyes.

"I'm sorry," he confided.

"I can't hear you say it," she said, wilfully misunderstanding him. "You could only pity the attic waif. Caroline has gone, you know."

She did not give him another chance to speak, for Jeminy was running down the carriage lane waving her shawl frantically and stumbling at every second step.

"The saints have forgotten us," she cried. "Such a to-do in the house—worse than this noontime. I was in my chamber, for I could not join the gathering in the drawing-room after what had happened, when I heard a most tremendous clatter, and, looking out, I saw"—she held her breath an instant—"the Lady Franklin."

"Rose. I must tell you," pleaded Cecil. He tried to hold her back.

They were all speaking at once.

"My father!" she said, excitedly.

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"Inside the coach," gasped Jeminy: "he won't get out. Lor', isn't it awful! I can never face him. I'd rather stay all night behind that juniper-bush with the slugs."

"We were going in the morning—it's a free ride home."

"You'll not leave me!" ventured the man, assuming a stern demeanor.

"Johnny Bull," she laughed, but her eyes lingered on his strong, lithe figure.

As they left the poppy-bed and went on past the sun-dial down the terrace to the arbor where bushes of white columbine grew side by side with that colonial flower, love-in-the-mist, they could see through the long Whitebush hall a group of figures blocking the doorway. Peering into its deeper twilight they observed one of the figures leave and run in their direction. It was the heiress, Miss Davenport, wringing her hands. "Caroline!" she called, unthinkingly going back to the old name. "Hurry, girl, Robert's here. The whole street's looking over, and Sukey Bitmush is up behind her shutter!"

By the bed of mignonette the girl paused, for Jeminy had reached the back stoop.

"You won't forget me, Englishman?" she murmured.



"THE BROKEN FOUNTAIN HID THE PAIR FROM PRYING EYES"

Over the Grumpers's Garden Wall

Now she heard words that leaped from a courage born of pain.

"It's not good-bye forever, then?" she ventured.

"Seas could not separate us—nor the wealth of the Indies."

"Nor titles, dear?"

"You have one, you know." He was bowing low to her, the old, mirthful expression playing about his lips.

"The Honorable Caroline?"

"Something finer than that."

"Oh, tell me, Cecil, I know that I have been waiting all my life to hear it from you."

But he didn't, for just then Lady Grumpers poked her head out into the night and wailed: "Oh, Marlton—my nevy"—she had taken to calling him by that endearing name—"chancing to see the Whitebush hussy's laughing-stock of a coach before the door, I was so frightened that I knocked over a candle and set your writing-book on fire. Lordy, hurry over the wall! I fear the story is burned—"

"My heroine would never desert me," he answered, almost gayly.

"Your what?" inquired her ladyship, knocking her huge cap against the sash.

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

"My heroine." This time his words were softer still, for Rose was bending behind a lilac-tree.

"We must go on—her voice is growing louder," she whispered, but, strange to say, neither of them moved.

XXV

The Lady Franklin's Last Chortle

“O D rabbit it!” said Mr. Heard, leaning far off the Lady Franklin’s box. “I didn’t want to come, missy; even Marthy Ethelinda were agin it. They bamboozled me out of Ambo’. I’ve half a mind not to drive ’ee. This old critter don’t like the business. She’s true quality, she is—takes after my Lady Franklin!”

Rose watched her father open that familiar, rickety, golden door where one-eyed cupids perched on nearly obliterated Franklin initials, then she seized his left arm and nestled close to him, her eyes raised pleadingly to his stern, inexorable countenance. “Couldn’t you forgive them, dear?” she urged. “They may have wronged you in the past, but think what I have done to them. Oh, the wretched minx I’ve been—a bold, unlady-like girl. I wish I had never left old Perth town.”

He did not answer, only led her pompously up

Caroline of Courtlandt Street

the creaking side steps made doubly dangerous by the dusk.

From the south side came a low, confused murmur of wondering voices.

The girl did not heed them, for she was lost in one of her own happy dreams. Once or twice she heard the flutter of tired wings as she looked up to the stars which seemed to be reading her secret. For a moment the night was full of enchantment. The key to Castle To-Morrow lay at her feet. As she hesitatingly touched Colonel Whitebush on the shoulder of his worn military coat—only donned on great occasions—she became a Rose as sweet as the roses in those drenched old gardens—lovelier for their tears. “I can’t let you go this way,” she pleaded. “Think of the weary years and the silence. Some day you will all lie together in Trinity’s yard. Turn back now, if you love me! Oh, Uncle Jonathan!” she sobbed.

“An end to this blubbering and open the door.”

Rose drew back, her mood changing. “Before I enter this coach, sir,” she cried, with some of the old-time spirit, “I would have you know I shall never marry Jepson Barker!” She stamped her tiny foot, sending a thrill through the chariot. “I go with you only because I have learned the

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folly of my ways. I see so many things I never thought of in Jersey. Ah, the dear, funny people of that house where you once lived—were they ever my terrible, beak-nosed White-bushes? They're my people, and yet I'm not one of them. I came here to show their world a fine lady—and what have they shown me?"

"They hated your mother," he said, sullenly.

"No, father, only the idea of her profession—if she could have found their affections—"

"Come," he ordered, impatiently, seizing her about the waist.

"I can't leave Jem," she entreated, sinking on one of the cinnamon cushions.

"She'll find port. I've had enough of her tricks."

A despairing mood seized her.

The life she had become a part of was fading away into the blackness—the vision of Sallie Lowe's theatre was gone. Jeminy, her faithful servant, was being left behind. She would never see Cecil Marlton again, she told herself. Already the coach was moving, and there wasn't one small sign of life in the Grumpers house. The key to Castle To-Morrow had slipped from her hand. There was no way of opposing her father's anger.

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"Don't, missy," called Mr. Heard from above. "The Lady Franklin's all of a shiver." And true enough, the ancient vehicle of the last quality dame of the Jerseys rocked strangely from one side of the street to the other, neglecting to bump out curtsies in her usual stately fashion.

As the coach rolled away an exciting scene was being enacted in the Whitebush mansion. That usually elegant exponent of London life, Miss Clarissa Wildairs, lay sprawled in a silken heap on the hall stairs weeping hysterically. "I don't care about myself—only it's cruel to be parted from the darling when I've been most a mother to her. He said I had brought her here—called me unfaithful, after making his bed for nigh twenty years—giving up all my aspirations for Sallie's child when I might have been an actress. Yes"—she shook her fist fiercely, misinterpreting their dazed looks—"more than a jumping-girl! Now I'm too old—and she—she's gone back to be sold for her father's gambling debts."

Poor Jemima Diddle! Even in her grief she still kept one foot on the boards, metaphorically speaking, and when she cried, did it with an exaggerated intensity. She made such an ear-splitting hubbub that emotional Miss Ora could

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not forbear joining in occasionally with a delicate, genteel sniff, becoming a sort of treble accompaniment to the other's deeper notes.

Jonathan hopped about flapping his coat-tails, pausing oftentimes in a futile search for help.

"After all, she is our own niece," said Marie—"nearer than if she had been the real Caroline."

"Your own flesh and blood!" sobbed Jemima. "Oh, if they would only think of a way to save her!"

"I always admired her," asserted Jane. "When she defied us yesterday I thought of something I once said to Samuel Grumpers."

"There's no time to be lost," exclaimed Jonathan.

"No—time—to be—lost!" screamed Jeminy.

"What shall we do?" asked Marie.

"I'll run out into the street and shriek," suggested Ora, "and perhaps the guard before the prison-house will hear me."

"The next boat doesn't leave for fifteen minutes," said Jonathan, consulting his timepiece.

"Cecil Marlton!" piped Marie, startling the room with her inspiration. "Watkins heard things a moment ago—she was listening behind the trellis when Caroline—Rose, I mean—came out to our unfortunate brother. A man in a

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garnet suit scaled the wall—now, who wears plum color, I'd like to know?"

"What things did Watkins hear?" asked Jane, judiciously.

"Noises."

"You dunderhead! What kind of noises?"

"Noises like kissing!"

"Oh!" exclaimed everybody.

"Yes," pleaded Jeminy, "go for him—he's so brave and good."

Miss Ora Davenport ran to the door and out into the street, never stopping until she reached the Grumpers domicile. What she told Lady Grumpers's guest, and the manner in which the young man repeated the tale to his hostess, no one ever ascertained, owing to the many conflicting rumors afterwards circulated in North River society. All we know is that in an incredibly short space of time, considering the fact that Lady Grumpers never had a very animated understanding, the heir to the baronetcy of Grantham, hatless, his neck-cloth flying in the wind, followed by her ladyship in a trailing bombazine, and the excited Miss Ora, hurried into the Whitebush hall.

"The scandal—stop them!" blurted forth the grand mogul of Courtlandt Street, rolling her eyes as usual. "All the south side's looking over."

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"You'll never recover from the disgrace of the story—it could scarcely have been worse if she had accepted Simpson's offer," urged the half-laughing youth. "We have ten minutes, you say, Mr. Whitebush? I suggest that every one of us run after them and break up this contemplated journey. Why, Caroline of Cloudsley, the belle of London town!" They all noticed the soft note in his voice as he said her name. "Consider what would Gotham do without her! You can't make a Caroline into a Rose in an instant. Your reputations, ladies!"

"But you don't know our brother."

"I do know his daughter."

"I'll go first," said Jane, suddenly courageous. "I used to box Robert's ears nigh forty years ago."

"We will offer them a home here," ventured Jonathan. "Hurry, girls—eight minutes more."

"Jonathan Whitebush," said Sir Samuel's widow, half pleased, "you've something better than fine taste—I remember when you called those gillyflowers on my gown pomegranates. If my late husband hadn't restricted my actions by his will, I might have—who knows, Johnny? How red Ora's growing! Gracious me, you're not going to tell me she's caught you, after all!"

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Her ladyship turned away and took from her bosom the little glass she always used in embarrassing situations—looking about until she discovered the disconsolate figure of Clarissa Wildairs. “Tell that creature to stay behind—I cannot stand her wheezing. The friend of Queen Charlotte—bah—the impudent drab to fool us so!”

“Come,” urged Jonathan, offering his arm.

By the door the stately procession halted. The moon was out again and the lines of poplar-trees were shimmering like the wings of some gigantic gossamer-moth.

“I can’t step out,” simpered Ora. “The three Bitmushes and Mr. Dimper—yes, I’m sure it’s Mr. Dimper, their lodger, although he’s never been let into one of the front bedrooms before—are watching us. The light dazzles me. Oh!” Miss Davenport jumped back a step, landing on Jane’s foot and making her howl with rage. “There’s Susquehanna Bimbleton on her roof—”

“Get on,” roared Lady Grumpers; rather vulgarly, the new Mrs. Jonathan Whitebush was heard to remark at a later period of her career—“I’m not afraid—for once I’ll give them something to look at,” and, gathering up the bom-

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bazine about her fat ankles, her ladyship waddled out into the highway regardless of puddles and stares.

Rose, in the creaking coach, was leaning on the colonel's arm, and once he touched her hair almost tenderly. "You always say, daddy, that Whitebush schemes fall through—there were the cabbages! Wouldn't it have been only fair to let me carry just one to an end, instead of dragging me off in this strange manner without a word of farewell?"

"Followed your mother? No, gal; I've saved you from that."

"There was another way," she sighed, smiling through her tears. The moon-beams crept into the musty interior lighting, up the faded brocade, and a playful gust of wind brought a delicious fragrance of the flower which bore her name.

She turned her head slightly, catching a view of the dark spire of St. Paul's. The perfume of roses that still swung in garlands from garden to garden told of other roses—Amboy roses dancing on the old town green, faded roses of remembrance that lay like lost whispers, or echoes of lovelier things among her mother's possessions, left behind at Whitebushes', the dead roses at her breast



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—merry blooms that were his. She shut her eyes as she thought of the last, only to open them hurriedly and gaze very intently. Then, by some sudden necromancy, two of them burned in her cheeks.

He was very near to her as the coach stopped.

"The boat's midstream," wheezed Mr. Heard.

"Lord! what's that?" asked the startled gentleman, trying to find the door-catch.

The hot, panting line was approaching the vehicle.

"I would seek you the world over," said his eyes.

"I knew you would never let me go," hers replied.

"Halt, man!" called Lady Grumpers.

"I demand it," threatened Jane.

"Please—have mercy—my breath!" cried Miss Ora.

Over in front of York House Marie Whitebush and Jemima Diddle, holding the starling in his wicker cage, were waving at them, surrounded by a circle of street gamins and chimney-sweeps. There promised to be a greater show on Courtlandt Street than the Lafayette fireworks before Colonel Rutgers's house in Cherry Lane.

"By Jove!" muttered Colonel Whitebush, using

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a stronger word under his breath. "Drive on, you varlet—anywhere—to escape this crew!"

"Robert, we want you to stay in Courtlandt Street," broke in Jonathan, clinging to the other window. "Let by-gones be by-gones—a fresh field. What say you to being lads again? We were dapper cronies once, boy."

"Drive on!" answered the other, hoarsely.

"Father! Dear Uncle Jonathan!" called Rose. All the while she was speaking she looked at Marlton. The light was slipping through the poplars and toying with his hair the way she liked. His attitude was that of a man pleading with joy—nay commanding it—to remain.

"Drive on!" Robert Whitebush sank back on the cushions.

Adoniram cracked his whip. "She's agin it," he quavered. "But your worship's wish!"

The Lady Franklin gave a leap, a quizzical sort of groan, followed by a noise which sounded suspiciously like one of her sly little chortles.

The eager, gesticulating circle watching her saw a back wheel topple off, and they raised their voices in a medley of fright.

Without warning the old gilt door swung back, and Mr. Heard, gulping down a gale of mirth, leaned over the foot-board. "I always flickered

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she were a gentlewoman. My lady's coach—a great lady's coach, ma'ams," he smirked, doffing his aged head-piece.

"Out, gal, 'tis fate," faltered the colonel.

Rose crept to her feet, clinging to the "brocady," as Mr. Heard directed. First she threw the company a kiss. All the witching, madcap, seductive lures of Caroline beamed in her smile.

"God bless her, Sallie's child!" sobbed Jeminy. "A born actress, though her mother was set on my making her a home bird. How happy she must be!"

The Englishman went down on one knee, holding out his arms.

"Shall I?" she hesitated, coyly.

"Come, Caroline—my Lady Comedy," he laughed.

"Up Courtlandt Street—for home," said Jonathan, lingering on the word as he turned to his silent followers.

"The dearest of places," whispered Cecil; "the caps can never find us there."

"Ours is in Castle To-Morrow," sighed the girl.

"Yes, sweetheart, it's rising off over the fir-trees."

As if in answer to their invocation, there rose

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in the distance the sweet refrain that had greeted them when first they stepped on the shores of York:

"No more from that cottage again will I roam,
Be it éver so humble, there's no place like home."

The starling, suddenly awake to the spirit of the hour, flapped his wings and called, exultingly, "Conk-quer-rée!"

The Lady Franklin had chortled for the last time. Perhaps it was the moonshine that made her look "so devilish grinny," as Adoniram called it. "I whetter 'ee ha' been crossish and light-witted and snail-like, and oft I've spat at ye and dripped for ye, but blessed if't ain't like my lady. You've a heart, old critter, under all your proud-spiritedness—a human heart!" And as Mr. Heard took a last look up the street at the fading figures growing more indistinct every minute, he poked his gray pate into the sweet, jasmine-scented dimness of his idol, and began crooning one of his quaint old songs of love in Jersey long, long ago.

THE END

